

THE SCORE

A MUSIC MAGAZINE

Editor: William Glock

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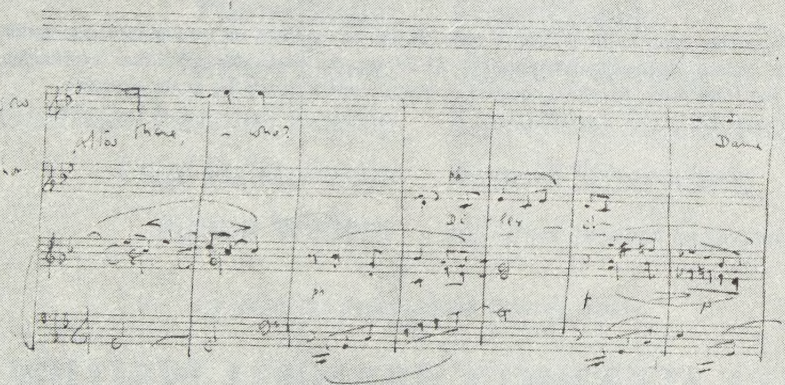
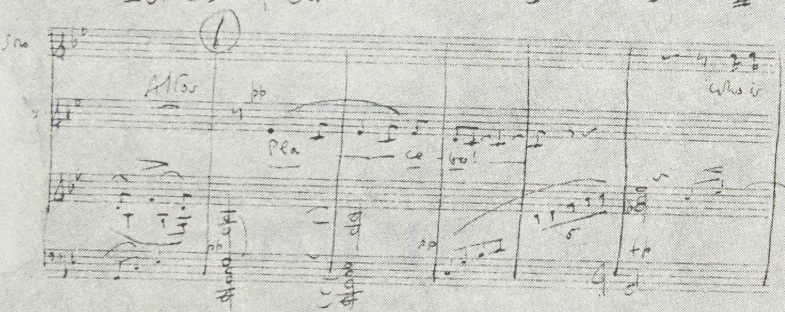
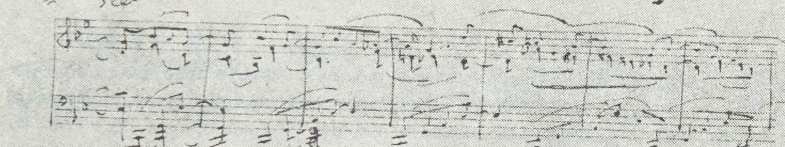
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Number 24, November 1958



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RALPH VAUGHAN WILLIAMS

1872 — 1958

Oliver Neighbour

The earlier years of this century were inimical to musical eclecticism. The gradual divergence of national schools during the nineteenth century became increasingly marked as tonality weakened, and it is hard to imagine a Tchaikovsky flourishing in the new situation that emerged. Of course, something that does not happen is not necessarily an impossibility, but it is noticeable that even such major figures as Bartók and Berg handled the eclectic streak in their musical thought with difficulty. Artists are sometimes said to have been born at the wrong time for their full development. No doubt this begs a number of questions, but one is tempted to see in Vaughan Williams a composer born at the only time in which he could have made his mark. From all accounts he was as a student quite exceptionally unreceptive of the principles even of decent academic composition, and the easy acceptance of the forms or vocabulary of the composers he admired was quite beyond him. There is no need to suppose such accounts exaggerated; the earliest compositions to reach publication, written when he was about thirty, bear them out. Such a mentality can only find salvation, if at all, in cultivating its own garden. History did nothing to help Vaughan Williams, but she refrained from hindering.

The crucial works in Vaughan Williams's output are those written immediately after the first war, when he was already nearly fifty. The experience of the war, so disastrous to Elgar, turned Vaughan Williams away from the amiable bluster of his early symphonies towards the world of the *Tallis Fantasia* and the song cycles. At the same time the years of enforced silence seem to have obliged him to think theoretically about his music. One has the impression that previously he had preferred to do his hard thinking empirically over the compositional problems presented by work in progress. In the *Mass*, the *Pastoral Symphony* and the *Shepherds of the delectable Mountains* he clearly made a conscious effort to isolate and master the technical discoveries of his earlier work, as well as the spiritual ones. Alone among English composers he attempted to uncover, examine and test the foundations of his art, and his courage was rewarded.

The works of the post-war group show two preoccupations. First, the vocabulary. The melody is modal, the harmony very largely restricted to major and minor triads, often in parallel motion. There are, of course, plenty of passages in the *Mystical Songs* and the *London Symphony* which display similar characteristics, and still more

in the *Four Hymns* of 1914, in which the modality is sometimes a little forced. But here the academic basis, upon which modality had first of all been grafted as a decoration, still serves as a framework. It only disappears in the post-war works, along with such chromatic features as had been used up till then. Vaughan Williams's extremely circumscribed idiom at this time is usually said to have arisen from his studies of English folk-song. It may be so in part, but the main features that I have described are to be found in most nationalist schools from the Russian onward, and it was, no doubt, of this that Schoenberg was thinking when he remarked that the more nationalists tried to be different the more they sounded the same. Similar means were seized on by French and Italian composers, from Debussy down, not as a concomitant of folk-song, for they had no need to establish national identity, but purely to inhibit tonal fluidity and oppose the invasion of chromaticism. This negative aim was no less important to nationalist composers, and it is probable that Vaughan Williams needed the break with German tradition quite as urgently as allegiance to English folk-song. For I do not think that the highly personal quality of his use of mode and triad is to be explained with reference to English folk-music. A few of his typical melodic turns may derive from forms particularly favoured in England, but the great majority of them can be related equally well to other western European traditions, many to the common pentatonic source. In the *Pastoral Symphony* the melodies rarely resemble folk-songs. The inflexions of folk-song go to make a melodic style inseparably bound up with a harmony in which the parallel triads create tonal balances of great subtlety, though over relatively short spans. Many other composers had discovered similar types of triadic harmony before, but none had found in it a complete language. Vaughan Williams discovered it anew for himself, used it with unique invention and flexibility, and saw in it a basis for further development.

In the *Pastoral Symphony* the composer is very much concerned not only with vocabulary but with the nature of his musical thought in a wider sense. The problem was really that of form, or should have been, but it presented itself in a rather different guise. I think the basis of Vaughan Williams's understanding of music, both as listener and creator, lay in the eloquence of the simple stanza melody, whether folk-song, hymn-tune or any other kind. This is true of all of us, but one feels that to him the expressive force of a tune was something quite unusually precise and definite; a change of a few notes could alter its meaning as radically as a few words might change the meaning of a sentence. This is very well brought out in his essay on Beethoven's ninth symphony and in programme notes to his own works, where he makes light of the connexion between related themes which *feel* different to him. He even refers to the return of the first subject in the coda to the first movement of the Beethoven as a 'new theme', because there is a change in the fourth bar which alters the balance of the phrase. Unlike much else in the essay the point is well made and touches a difficult truth about our response to music, as well as throwing light on his own musical sensibility. Musical continuity is thus seen as a kind of reasoned discourse in which 'it is the duty of the composer to find the *mot juste*'. When a composition nears completion 'the composer wants to have the opportunity . . . to remember emotion in tranquillity, to sit down quietly and make sure that he has

achieved the *mot juste* at every point'. Occasionally in Holst's earlier music 'the *mot juste* fails him for the moment and he falls back on the common stock of musical device'. Instances of dangerous stock devices would, I suspect, include most forms of passage work. Vaughan Williams does not often use anything of the kind himself, and, although the tonal aspect of his forms was in any case too weak to encompass it, his overriding objection would have been that it did not *speak* in the direct way he required.

It is curious that a composer whose mentality so strongly suggests the miniaturist should have done most of his best work in large forms. In structure as in vocabulary the *Pastoral Symphony* isolates and builds upon the personal methods of the best sections of the *London*. The music progresses in terms of a melodic discourse. In order to work this idea out fully Vaughan Williams temporarily abandons strong contrasts, so that the work has sometimes been taken for a backwater in his progress, instead of the landmark it is. Except in the scherzo there are no stanza melodies. These disappear for good from his sonata thinking after the *London Symphony*. The melodic lines have the direct quality of tunes sung to words, expanding as such tunes cannot, yet retaining the same character. Thus they scarcely use sequences or diminution of note-values to heighten tension, but evolve evenly, now motivically, now more freely, each stage clinched with astonishing rhythmic resource. This process can build its own kind of tension, but as the melodies develop they give rise to counter subjects of kindred expression and direct imitations which intensify but do not diversify. They furnish the chief means of shaping a passage or movement. This is the pattern of thought that underlies all Vaughan Williams's finest structures. Indeed they stand or fall by it, for although he learnt to make good use of tonalities, his modal thinking assigned a secondary rôle to them. To work outwards towards a large form in this way is clearly very difficult. It is not surprising that he did not find the *mot juste* to bridge every gap; in some cases no such word could have existed. Such faults are so obvious that no one can miss them, and his amateurishness is a byword. The extraordinary intelligence that framed the paragraphs between should not be forgotten.

I have emphasized the element of retrenchment in the post-war works, but they break new ground in at least one important respect. A very personal factor in the use of parallel triads in the *Mass* is the strict adherence to modal inflexion, so that false relations often occur. (The influence of the rather frequent use of false relations by English composers at certain periods may perhaps be present, though it is doubtful whether this has much bearing on what is felt to be the national character of Vaughan Williams's music.) When in the *Pastoral Symphony* and the *Shepherds of the delectable Mountains* some of the contrapuntal strands are represented by rows of triads or partial triads, the modality quickly induces a chromatic situation which might loosely be termed bitonal. The chromaticism that invades the works of the next decade is rooted in this procedure, just as the marvellous diatonic counterpoint so typical of the composer's serene pastoral manner derives from diatonic chordal streams. This is apparent even where each part is only a single line, for it affects their highly characteristic movement in relation to one another, and the frequent bichordal nature of their vertical coincidence. One has only to remember the chromatic excursions in certain early works, and the rather more attractive diatonic suspensions of

Easter or the first movement of the *Sea Symphony* (as at 'token of all brave captains') to realize how stylistic transformation has deepened inspiration.

In his essay on Holst, Vaughan Williams remarks that 'idiom is a part of inspiration'; in other words, style in some degree generates idea. However that may be, it is certain that his works were never more varied in conception or vigorous in invention than during this period of stylistic expansion. The necessary technical means at last at his command, his genius burst out in new directions with each work. Perhaps *Sancta Civitas* was too ambitious a first step to be taken without some backward glances, but it initiates a remarkable series of works that includes *Flos Campi*, the *Concerto Accademico*, *Riders to the Sea*, *Job*, the *Magnificat* and the *Piano Concerto*, and culminates in the *F minor symphony*. It is perhaps the richest period of his career.

A contributory factor to these developments is to be found in Vaughan Williams's interest in the continental scene, which began to present more sympathetic aspects to him than it had done before the war. Both he and Holst suddenly found themselves more in tune with events abroad than their juniors who had taken Strauss and Debussy as their models. Their swift development of chromaticism was certainly prompted by the keen interest they took in foreign contemporaries. Each wrote a neo-classical concerto, and Vaughan Williams at least learned a good deal from the experience.

The only direct influence that Vaughan Williams ever allowed himself was that of Holst. Imogen Holst has warned us that it is difficult to be certain whether her father or Vaughan Williams began any development that they shared, because publication dates were often delayed and each saw the other's work from the beginning. All the same, I suspect that Holst, with his more analytical and adaptable mind, was usually in the lead, and it is plain that Vaughan Williams imitated him from time to time, not always with understanding. At this period he probably profited from his friend's view of contemporary events, though, as his later years show, he was not dependent on his mediation. Yet in a more real sense Vaughan Williams always held the lead. Holst's gifts were very different. His ear for sonorities and his harmonic sense were more refined in a limited context, but his style had no unified basis. He lacked Vaughan Williams's melodic invention and contrapuntal flair to carry on from his initial *trouvailles*. Every major step in a composition was perilous.

This, as I have already suggested, was also the point that gave Vaughan Williams most difficulty. *Flos Campi* and *Job*, for example, lack unity, but even so the vigour of the sections goes far to mitigate the defect. Except in the slow movement, the *Piano Concerto* succeeds better, and in the *Fourth Symphony* and the ensuing works such weaknesses are relatively unimportant. Unfortunately fluency brought dangers as well as advantages. *Jane Scroop*, from the *Tudor Portraits*, is a wonderful piece which Vaughan Williams could never have sustained at an earlier date, but in *Elinor Rumming* he finds music all too easily for a lengthy text that he is unwilling to sacrifice. He could only write his best music when he was intensely concerned with the eloquence of each phrase.

From this and all other points of view the *Fourth* and *Fifth Symphonies* are undoubtedly his crowning achievements. They contain the most perfect and the

most ambitious expression of everything he had established in the *Pastoral Symphony* and developed subsequently. The two works are directly opposed in mood, but in each movement, except perhaps in the *Scherzo* of the Fourth, there are episodes or subtle undercurrents suggesting the world of the other symphony, so that both represent the composer's whole vision. A comparison of the slow, or even the first movement of the *F minor Symphony* with the first or third of the *D major* shows how completely the thought is of a piece. The derivation of the *Fifth Symphony* from the earlier parts of the *Pilgrim's Progress* is most illuminating. Vaughan Williams never succeeded with full-scale opera as he did with choral and instrumental music. He had one rare gift for the task, he could write good tunes in many veins. Given a good libretto, the *Poisoned Kiss*—which consists of songs and spoken dialogue—should have made a better sequel to *Sir John in Love* than the *Pilgrim's Progress* did. There is indeed an astonishing gulf between the achievement of the latter and the intention as it is revealed in the symphony. Yet much of the material is the same. Nothing could demonstrate more clearly the genius of Vaughan Williams's individual structural thinking.

Nearly all the major symphonists of the late 19th and early 20th centuries were post-Wagnerians in the sense that they tried to make their symphonies a vehicle for the kind of spiritual adventure and aspiration that his operas dealt with. Vaughan Williams, who was deeply affected by Wagner, was perhaps the last of them. All his symphonies, except the eighth, are Odysseys of the soul, programmatic but without definable programme. In none is this more striking than in the sixth, which made a tremendous impact when it was first heard. It certainly contains great inspirations, but for the first time the programme is not part and parcel of the musical thought. It is imposed from without upon a style in which the minor triad too often replaces subtler harmonic thinking, and too much is demanded of its expressive possibilities. The strongest movement, the second, is a *tour de force*; the epilogue is extended for dramatic reasons beyond the length required by the material. Neither can show the rich musical content of the slow movement of the *Fourth Symphony*, with which they invite comparison. The first movement has an unaccountably weak centre, and the main part of the *Scherzo* shows a lack of judgment that was to reappear from time to time in later works.

Most of the smaller works of the last ten years suffer in comparison with those of the best period because their greater fluency cannot disguise the lower level of thematic and harmonic invention. Even the *Oboe Concerto*, written before the *Sixth Symphony*, falls far short of the similarly small-scale *Violin Concerto* of twenty years earlier, though the *A minor Quartet*, of the same period, is a much better work with a marvellous slow movement that would not disgrace the *Fifth Symphony*. Many of the late works were written for amateurs or special occasions and perhaps do not attempt very much. In others the composer seizes on some extraneous idea, such as pitting a speaker, a piano and chorus, a mouth-organ or a bass tuba against the orchestra. This tends to create difficulties instead of lending interest, though there are some fine things here and there, for instance the beautiful slow movement of the *Tuba Concerto*, and parts of the *Oxford Elegy*. Very few of the better passages in the *Pilgrim's Progress* belong to this time. The attempts to enlarge vocabulary in the

Sinfonia Antartica do not arise from the musical thought but are imposed upon it and stifle it.

Only in his last three major works did Vaughan Williams learn to make full use of the special capacities that old age and long experience had left him. Seldom had he handled his hard-won and well-known language with such inspired grace and precision as in the songs from *This Day* which, despite the disappointing choruses at the end, is probably his finest choral work. It has been greatly underrated, like the symphony that followed it, the eighth. Here each of the four movements is an excellent piece of work, not least the very original *Toccata*. The disparity of mood between them, and between the variations that form the first movement, is balanced by the almost monothematic structure. It is neither so light nor so jolly a work as is often said. If its more relaxed manner prevents it equalling the best things in the *Sixth Symphony*, it maintains a more consistent level of musical interest and can stand beside both the sixth and the *Pastoral*. The ninth perhaps falls a little short of them, though the attempt to construct the outer movements on more purely contrapuntal principles than ever before is impressive. The first movement is the more successful formally, the discursive finale less well in focus but very beautiful at times. The trios of the middle movements are raised above their heavy-handed surroundings by a strange, melancholy quality which returns at the beginning of the finale, when a last pilgrimage is made to the delectable mountains. The shepherds' pipes still play, but the clear sunlight is hidden by grey mist. None of the composer's earlier visions of desolation is so moving.

There are many views of Vaughan Williams's music, but it is usually agreed that he and Holst made it in some way easier for English composers to find themselves, though the evidence for this may seem rather slender. It is certainly observable that national traditions in composition are helpful, though less easy to see how they arise. Vaughan Williams himself thought that, however little younger composers cared for the folk-song movement, they tended to show the influence of national melody as their elders had not. There may be some truth in this as far as it goes, but his advice to them that they should learn their craft at home before widening their horizons seems to presuppose rather than point the way towards the tradition it was designed to foster.

In point of fact this warning is only concerned with nationalism as an extension of something more personal and fundamental. 'What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?' His quotation in this connexion recalls Stravinsky's recent remark that composers must know what they love, and Schoenberg's reminder, 'of course a soul you have to have'. Not even these composers have a greater right to speak of idealism than Vaughan Williams. I am not only thinking of the courage required to sustain so many years of initial failure and active discouragement, then so long and difficult a pilgrimage towards the expression of his genius, and finally the late acclaim behind which he could discern a world to which he was a stranger. His late setting of Matthew Arnold was surely prompted by his sympathy for the poet's doubt; it was Holst's voice that he tried to hear in Clough's imagined words of reassurance, 'Why faintest thou? I wandered till I died. Roam on! the light we sought is shining still'.

More important still was an element of doubt at the core of Vaughan Williams's idealism, which Schoenberg's Moses might have understood. He believed that the 'media which artists . . . use, are symbols . . . of what lies beyond sense and knowledge'. 'The object of art is to stretch out to the ultimate realities through the medium of beauty.' 'All art is the imperfect human half-realization of that which is spiritually perfect.' Art is a means, not an end; art for art's sake is a heresy. For 'the mass of the people' realize that art is not 'a mere luxury, but a necessity of the spiritual if not of the physical life'. There is an intolerable contradiction in the necessity of remaining of the people and assuming the priest's rôle of interpreter. Hence the composer's abiding affection for the earliest and weakest of his seven real symphonies, the *London*, in which he speaks to the people with least risk of setting himself up, of claiming spiritual authority; hence too the occasional quixotic disclaimers which break in upon some of his later works. Art itself may fall under suspicion, since a means may be hired to various ends. In the *Sinfonia Antartica* man is represented by music that thinks and speaks, the inanimate world by static music emptied of expression or aspiration. Complete artistic failure is inevitable because inherent in the idea of the work. In the third movement, which is purely a landscape, there is a horrifying moment when the organ enters *fortissimo* and shatters the music's orchestral framework. It is an act of astonishing violence, as though the composer wished to destroy music itself for its capacity to be false to its spiritual purpose. His troubled idealism is that of the English puritan tradition. Its tensions give his greatest works their depth and power, inspiring intense sympathy in some listeners, but at the same time limiting his appeal.

We hear much of Vaughan Williams's simplicity and directness. He certainly possessed these qualities, but a complex musical personality underlies them. He wore the influence of folk-song more lightly than almost any other eminent nationalist composer. He took a wider interest in the world around him than many who thought him provincial, his nationalism being an aspect of his positive and creative mentality. His obvious faults occur in a context of powerful and individual musical thinking. His most important service to English music lies quite simply in the quality of his music. He is not, of course, among the very great composers of his time, but in England his place is beside Elgar. No composer in this country less than forty years his junior can approach him.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE HAYDN QUARTETS

Hans Keller

I. INTRODUCTION

The present notes are based on my work at this year's Summer School of Music at Dartington, where I took a four weeks' class in the interpretation of Haydn's string quartets, and beyond that on my teaching experience in general. The point I thus wish to make at the outset is that my observations should prove practical. Not one of them has been conceived in the arm-chair. So far as interpretation itself is concerned, I am confining myself to questions and problems raised by students and performers.

At any given stage in the interpretation of a work, there is ultimately only one simple consideration which, in view of the enormous amount of high-faluting pedagogy that is obscuring the educational air at this hyper-intellectual historical juncture, I should like to express by way of a monosyllabic proposition: *You have to feel or know how the tune goes*. Knowing implies feeling; feeling does not necessarily mean conceptual knowledge.

There are, of course, many ways of expressing how the tune goes. Tempo, dynamics, agogics are interdependent variables, means towards this end. But there is only one way in which a good (well-defined) tune goes, and if a student takes the wrong turning there, the one occasion arises where, even on the master-class level or indeed at a yet maturer stage in the student's development, the teacher has to step in actively.

Now since, in this essay, I am not addressing myself to a particular student or quartet group, I naturally have to be more active than in actual teaching or coaching. When talking about any particular phrasing, I shall often have to concentrate on this basic question of how the tune goes—even though many a reader may know the answer. At the same time, as I know from experience not only when and how the tune most easily goes wrong in a player's mind, but also a rich variety of concrete ways in which the right conception tends to be wrongly realized (behind the player's own ears, as it were), it is to be hoped that my aim—to anticipate, even in the case of individual phrasings, the most urgent latent questions in the reader's mind—will not turn out to be altogether illusory.

In any case, nothing could be further from my mind than to write down to my readers, and if the fact that an essay frankly teaches immediately arouses such a

suspicion, it only goes to show how wrong, how inflated teaching has become in our uncertain age. The teacher's religious goal must be to make himself unnecessary, and if a grown musician calls himself an 'XYZ pupil', we have conclusive evidence that somewhere both he and Mr. XYZ have failed in their common task. Flesch recounts in his *Memoirs*: '“ My name's Schulze, a Joachim pupil,” a youngster once said in introducing himself to the pianist Bruno Eisner at a party. “ Don't let that worry you,” came the answer.'

II. THE AGE OF INARTISTIC SPECIALIZATION

'The Interpretation of the Haydn Quartets' may have an ominous ring, as indeed it had for one or two students at Dartington: was there a 'Haydn specialist' coming? Why did he confine himself to Haydn?

In the event, he didn't; and the practical musician's suspicion of specialism is sound. It ought to be encouraged in the face of the new musicological tyranny which would make us approach heaven by way of historical faithfulness, also known as 'style', rather than artistic truthfulness—or sense.

The reason for the choice of the Haydn quartets was in fact the very opposite of any tendency towards specialization. Owing to (a) the decline of spontaneous, intuitive musicality, (b) the development of instrumental technique, (c) the resultant cleft between amateur and professional, (d) the concert hall and (e) the gramophone record, genuine chamber music in general, and the string quartet in particular, are at present going through a murderous crisis on both the creative and the recreative plane. To put it bluntly, fewer and fewer people know how to write a genuine string quartet because fewer and fewer people know how to play it—and *vice versa*: it is a vicious circle.

Symptomatic of this state of affairs is the fact that while the string quartet is acknowledged to be the highest form of instrumental music so far attained, and while our obsessional age digs about in the past as no previous age has done, at the considerable risk of unearthing and admiring the purest rubbish, Haydn's string quartets, the few relatively famous ones apart, are more or less unknown amongst composers and players alike. Yet these works are, in a definite sense, the first and the last great string quartets *par excellence*. Any player who really understands them will be in a musical position to interpret any good string quartet up to Schoenberg; any composer who really understands them will be able to write in terms of, rather than just for, the medium.

Now to the reasons why everybody who knows them grants the Haydn quartets the exalted place just indicated. First of all, so far as consistently natural excellence, profound musical greatness and unfailing textural mastery are concerned, there are, in any case, only two comparable composers: Mozart and Beethoven. Mozart was not fundamentally a quartet composer in the same sense as Haydn or Beethoven. Measured against his total output, he wrote very few great quartets—the ten 'celebrated' ones, in fact. If you know them, you know Mozart the quartet composer. If you know the 'Ten' or 'Fifteen' or even 'Thirty Celebrated Haydn Quartets' (as

they appear in various editions), on the other hand, you don't even know half the quartet composer; in fact, much of the most important and most characteristic Haydn is as yet unknown to you. For Haydn is invariably at his greatest in his countless master quartets, and if somebody knew his quartets without knowing a single one of his symphonies, he would have learnt more of Haydn's message than if he knew all the symphonies without knowing the quartets. In brief, the quartets are immeasurably greater than the symphonies. (I might add here that H. C. Robbins Landon, the author of the recent monumental *Symphonies of Joseph Haydn*, entirely agrees with me.)

Every single one of these masterpieces, moreover, is utterly different from any other: they represent a far-reaching creative development rather like Beethoven's. Mozart's great quartets, on the other hand, are far more alike in their basic structural approach, and the development which they represent is such that, if we are honest, we do not even always find it easy to say, on purely musical grounds, which is the earlier and which is the later. (It is in the spheres of the piano concerto and the string quintet that Mozart's instrumental music is at its most original and varied, that it develops most intensely from work to work.)

The only serious competitor among the giants, then, remains Beethoven—who, we all know, is a special case. For one thing, his great quartets—he did not write any 'celebrated' ones or, if you like, only celebrated ones—are of course far fewer than Haydn's, and therefore give a less detailed picture of the most intimate part of his spiritual development. For another, while his evolution as a quartet composer eventually carried him into spheres of unheard-of expression where nobody, with the possible exception of Schoenberg, has been able to follow him, it was inevitable that on the way he had to sacrifice classical perfection. In point of fact, a certain kind of imperfection, of instrumental strain, became part and parcel of the creative act. This is not a criticism, but it does mean that at his sublimest, Beethoven is sometimes at his most problematic: in the case of one famous, discarded finale, he burst the bounds of the string quartet altogether. Of course, you get the occasional problematic Haydn quartet, too; but with Haydn, problems are incidental, not essential to his highest achievements. Far from presenting an act of specialization, then, our concentration on Haydn's quartets means that we are trying to help towards the most fundamental, general, comprehensive approach to the whole realm of the string quartet. I have yet to hear a quartet solve the problems of Beethoven's most towering creations without a firm grounding in Haydn; all those quartet ensembles which 'specialize' in Beethoven are as suspect as our title may have seemed to some.

As we look through the literature on the string quartets of Haydn, especially the weightier part of it, an uneasy feeling takes hold of us, a feeling that somewhere, something is continually wrong. The curious thing is that the righter the observation we happen to be reading, the stronger this awareness becomes that the writer is slightly off the point, at any rate the central point: he seems to be circling round it concentrically, more or less closely, without ever hitting it. In a flash, we eventually realize what is wrong: none of these worthy authorities (so far as I know them) has ever played a Haydn quartet in his life.

Now a string quartet is the opposite of a Wagner opera. You cannot fully understand a Wagner opera when you play in it, and the worst Wagner conductors are usually those praised most by orchestral players, amongst other things because at last they can play most of the notes, which in a truthful interpretation of more than one Wagner passage you can't. But the disillusionment about Wagner which tends to seize the orchestral pit is itself illusory: Wagner's orchestration is so lavishly over-insured that even when, in the third act of *Tristan*, you are ready to drop, which means that you shamelessly move your exhausted bow across the open strings, the necessary notes will still be heard at the reception end.

A string quartet, on the other hand, is an esoteric symphony: it is addressed, not primarily to an audience, but to the players themselves, and I think you cannot completely understand it without playing it (unless you happen to be the composer). That the authorities on Haydn's quartets haven't played them, and that those who play some of them can hardly be considered authorities, makes us alive to one of the ultimate absurdities into which our age's envelopment in specialized spheres of competence has driven us.

Another such absurdity, though immeasurably more harmful, is distinctly less obvious. Even when you regularly play string quartets, you are not necessarily inside them. The surest way really to get at the heart of a quartet is to change parts—something which virtually never happens nowadays. It is of course difficult for the cello to participate in this exchange of rôles, but a fiddler's viola-playing, and a viola player's fiddle-playing, ought to be a matter of course; in fact, the division between the two occupations is quite artificial. It is very recent, too; one of the deadest ends of the specializing age.

At the Summer School and elsewhere, I have successfully forced players (all but physical force is usually needed) to change over from one instrument to the other; in fact, in this particular respect, I have not yet failed once, though I am invariably promised failure by my prospective victims. That our musical culture is gradually becoming one big blind obsessional neurosis can be gathered not only from the usual argument, 'The change-over will spoil my intonation', but even more so from the fact that my usual reply, 'In that case, don't ever move into the higher positions on your own instrument, for the difference in finger-distance between them and the first position is greater than that between violin and viola', is regularly received as if it were a major revelation. Our technique-conscious youngest generation might usefully be reminded that men like Arnold Rosé or Carl Flesch still played both instruments without making a fuss about it, both indeed at virtuoso level.¹ Flesch played *Harold in Italy* in several concerts, and, as a boy, I still saw Rosé get up from his leader's desk in the Vienna Philharmonic, take the viola, and play the *Concertante* with Huberman—better than most viola specialists I know. Nowadays, on the other hand, there are gifted viola players who have difficulty in reading the treble clef! Purely from the point of view of tone production, one naturally acquires a far deeper understanding of the character of an instrument by playing a related, yet contrasting

¹ In Schoenberg's *Pierrot Lunaire*, which is chamber music, you have to change to and fro between the two instruments at the shortest notice. Some of our modern specialists labour under the mistake that Schoenberg wanted two players for the job!

one, which is why Rosé had a marvellous viola tone, whereas most of our viola specialists play the violin on the viola (I am not excluding some of the leading virtuoso figures).

III. THE QUARTETS

Upon examination, it is surprisingly easy to find what makes a Haydn quartet 'celebrated': regular rhythmic structures. While it is true that each of these chosen 'draws' is a great masterpiece, many equally great works, and quite a few greater ones, have remained unchosen by the celebrants. In distributing our space, we shall have to take the fact into account that the celebrated quartets are better understood, or likely to be better understood, than the other masterpieces.

For the purposes of easier reference, our survey will proceed in the order of opus numbers. My own task will thereby be made a little more difficult, because observations will have to be made which apply to more than one work. On the other hand, the reader should find it fairly easy to look up any particular work and trace relevant remarks in other sections; so far as the concreteness of these remarks are concerned, at any rate, he will be helped by cross-references.

It will be observed that other things being equal, my notes will tend to get progressively shorter, because implicitly as well as explicitly, later problems will be solved by earlier answers.

(1) OP. 1, Nos. 1-6; OP. 2, Nos. 1-6; OP. 3, Nos. 1-6

On the whole, indeed almost as a whole, the early divertimento quartets, a dozen and a half of them, can from our present standpoint be dismissed. Haydn, it appears, wrote them with a view chiefly to getting some Third Programme dates, and also in order to arouse the interest of musicologists. The disproportionate amount of thought and space which the latter have devoted to these uncharacteristic quartets—uncharacteristic both as quartets and as Haydn—borders on the comic.

At the same time, popular favour has singled out the so-called 'Serenade', i.e. the slow C major movement of the F major Quartet, Op. 3, No. 5. As we have just felt in the case of the celebrated quartets, and contrary to current highbrow opinion, popular favour is usually right; it is popular disfavour or neglect that can be so disastrously wrong. This *Andante cantabile* is in fact a continuous inspiration and must be played as such—as a widely arched, emphatically developing melody. If you play the first sentence too openly, without regard for its restatement and subsequent unfolding, you might as well pack up and go home at the first perfect cadence, for in that case, nothing remains to be said anyway. And the clearest way to realize the dominant stage (climactically introduced by the dominant's dominant with its turn to the dominant minor) is by intense dynamic suppression—by a tender *piano* that feels like a repressed *forte*.

The *pizzicato* accompaniment is by far the most difficult aspect of the movement. It is a test in spontaneous musicianship which every chamber-musician should make a point of honour to pass with colours flying.

For one thing, you can't cheat with *pizzicatos*; they are either there on the dot or they aren't, and they have to be absolutely in relative tune: the other person may always be wrong in a marriage, but he or she is always right in a string quartet. And pitch being but a dimension of colour (as Schoenberg says at the end of the *Harmonielehre*), the intonation depends on the *pizzicatos*' discreetly rounded tone.

For another, more complex thing, the *pizzicatos* must serve the first violin without reservation, which is to say that the leader must feel free to develop his melody, though if he is a born and mature leader he will, at the same time, be led by those he leads, above all in the infinitesimal *rubatos* at the main junctures of structural articulation, where he has a crotchet rest.

Beyond that, there are two ways of passing a driving test—one where you can drive afterwards and one where you can't. In the trios of Op. 64, no. 4 and Op. 76, no. 1 it will be apparent which way an ensemble has passed the *pizzicato* test, and it is with a view to these works (see (11) and (14) above) that I have devoted so much space to the present movement.

(2) OP. 9, Nos. 1-6

With this set, Haydn the quartet composer as well as Haydn the genius emerges—at an age at which Mozart died. The outstanding work is indisputably no. 4, his first quartet in the minor mode. Like three other first movements of the set, the opening *Allegro moderato* evinces what, for short, one might call the 'Boccherini tempo'—the kind of weighty *tempo* character, that is to say, which induces the somnolent lower-part player, even if he is not slow-witted, to mistake half a bar for a whole one during rest- or minim-time. It is essential to have a clear mental picture of the *tempo* character from the outset if a conscious and well-defined build-up of the rhythmic structures is to be achieved. All this may sound elementary, but, empirically speaking, it isn't.

In the characterization of the principal subject, care should be taken not to accent the semiquaver upbeat (de-accentuated in Ex. 1 by way of Schoenberg's symbolology) at the end of the second bar and the imitations that flow from it. This is

Allegro moderato

a figure which plays a basic part throughout the movement, including the development, and if it is wrongly phrased everything is lost. Yet it is very easy to phrase it wrongly, because when one newly enters, especially with short notes and a new character, an accent will easily slip in on the entry, and the danger is tripled where one imitates *a tre* (bars 3-4). The most natural way to avoid the danger is to play the figures as a contrasting variation, but still a rhythmic variation, of the model (x) and echo (x¹) in bar 2; it will be seen that the model-echo relationship is retained in its outline, but varied and developed into antecedent and consequent motifs.

Among the other quartets of this set, no. 5 in B flat is recommended as a fruitful playing introduction to the mature works.

(3) Op. 17, Nos. 1-6

These pieces are neither sufficiently substantial as music nor sufficiently unproblematic as quartets to be attempted by any except those who have acquired a thorough knowledge of Haydn's true masterpieces, all of them. Since so far I have met only three such musicians it would be unrealistic, within my prescribed space, to go into the question of Op. 17's interpretation.

(4) Op. 20, Nos. 1-6

With the first quartet of Op. 20, we reach the starting-point of a wellnigh unbroken line of towering works of genius. At about forty Haydn has, as a quartet composer, reached maturity. A miracle that is to extend over three decades has begun.

The opening movements of the first, second, and fifth works of the set are still in 'Boccherini tempo', but this is about the only characteristic they have in common either with each other or with anything else; though in the interpretation of the first movement of no. 1 in E flat, the same considerations apply, *mutatis mutandis*, as in the case of the semiquaver upbeat (Ex. 1) in Haydn's first D minor Quartet (see (2) above):



None of the mature Haydn minuets—in quartet or symphony—is a minuet; it is always composed against the background of a minuet. It is one of the most common errors of current interpretations to play these movements as if they were dance movements. The consequent of the E flat minuet's theme explains my point better than words could do: to all intents and purposes, its first two bars are a 6/4 bar. The antecedent is, of course, more neatly divided into two 2-bar phrases, but the *forte* on the first beat certainly doesn't signify a dance accent; all it means is that the antecedent, as opposed to the consequent, proceeds at *forte* level. The aim of the antecedent remains its very last and top note—the A flat, a circumstance emphasized by the unprecedented absence of slurs in the second violin and cello and of a tie in the viola.

The spirit of the *Affettuoso e sostenuto* can be approached by way of a better-known movement, likewise a slow A flat one in an E flat quartet, i.e. the *Andante con moto* of Mozart's K.428, where Haydn's 3/8 is replaced by 6/8. Haydn's 3/8 need not in fact be taken all that literally either, except where it is stressed by *sforzatos*, whose very presence shows, on the most superficial level, how Haydn wants the texture to flow when they aren't there. *Mezza voce*, incidentally, does not mean an affected and lifeless *piano*, but the kind of repressed tone which is only possible in a string quartet. The blend must of course be treated with extreme caution in a movement of this kind, where even an instrument which does not as such blend well with the rest will easily show up.

Two crucial points of phrasing arise in the finale. One is the viola's and cello's restatement of the opening, whose *forte* means again *forte* level, not an inadvertently accented upbeat; indeed, the main beat of the structure is not reached until the next bar—and this, of course, goes for the opening phrase itself too. Secondly, there are the syncopations. It is surprising how many players who manage the most complex modern rhythms with superficial ease are unable to realize this texture naturally. Everybody must hear everybody; when the passage finally flows, the leader will have a chance to shape his line without anxiety, and the whole quartet will be prepared for the coda of the first movement of the 'Fifths' (Op. 76, no. 2, see (14) below).

For the first time since Op. 3, no. 3, Haydn, in Op. 20, no. 2, adopts what was to become the classical order of movements, with the *Adagio* preceding the minuet. The 'Boccherini tempo' of the opening movement is utilized in the development, which displaces the first subject's central motif by a half-bar. For the rest, the development is the second fiddle's finest minute. Neither exhibitionism nor timidity is indicated for these semiquavers. What is wanted is a flexible and calm *forte*. The texture is marvellously calculated; cello and first violin stand out easily, and the second violin part isn't half as difficult as it sounds: it lies very well.

The *Adagio* is in the tonic minor, which makes the quartet homotonal²—as indeed are nos. 3-5. Haydn's harmonic adventurousness has often been noted, but there is this opposite tonal tendency too, which reminds us how close Haydn lived to the old instrumental forms—a fact we tend to forget just because of his newness.

² I have introduced this term for works whose movements are based on the same tonic.

The semiquaver accompaniments of this movement have to be round and unobtrusive. I am not an admirer of the Carmirelli Quartet's Haydn, but one thing they do splendidly although it isn't their invention: they play this kind of accompaniment up and down on the upper half of the bow, describing a little curve in the process rather than running, in the orthodox fashion, strictly parallel to the bridge. Actually, this kind of bowing was quite usual towards the end of the last century, but vanished with the development of modern technique. One or two of my students at Dartington were, fortunately, most impressed by the sound the Carmirellis thus produced, and I only had to say 'Carmirelli bowing!' in the case of an accompaniment like the present one in order to hear the most sensitive sound ensue.

The first five bars of the minuet are an upbeat to the sixth, and without a crystal-clear realization of this rhythmic structure the movement has no chance of survival. As for the fugue, there is no *forte* until 34 bars before the end, and all preceding dynamic shadings have to take place *sotto voce*—but they have to be there all the same. This fugue is easier than the one that closes the first F minor Quartet, Op. 20, no. 5, for which it is a wonderful preparation. (The A major one in no. 6 is the most difficult of the set, and the F# minor one in Op. 50, no. 4 (*see* (7) *below*) is the most difficult altogether.

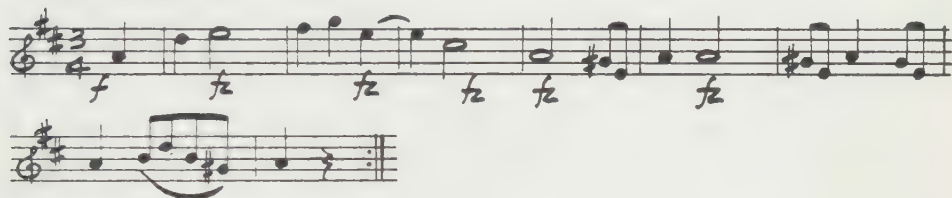
In the first G minor Quartet, no. 3, the old order of movements prevails. But the music itself is of the highest originality, and the irregular rhythmic structures of the first movement look into the most distant future. The theme itself is already an overpowering 4+3 build-up; the three-bar phrase must be played with a conviction that is proportionate to the surprise it creates. The octave-unison 'aside' on the relative major's dominant (which introduces the second subject of what is one of Haydn's characteristic monothematic sonata forms) should be played with all the subtle imagination that is needed for this kind of thing. What kind of thing? Let us vary the metaphor and call it an off-stage effect. And as we think that the main surprises are past because we are drawing to the end of the exposition, there comes an astonishing passage of 'musical prose' (as Reger or Schoenberg would say). Its interpretation might be facilitated by a reminder of how a modern composer would have written it. While the basic metre is 2/4, the passage amounts to a 5/4-bar followed by a 3/4-bar followed by a 4/4-bar. The first violin has to keep to the A-string, not primarily because of its colour, but because of the two parallel *glissandos* involved. These have to be executed without the usual contemporary inhibitions about *glissandos* in the so-called classical style (the correct term is *portamentos*, but apart from Flesch nobody uses it). The necessary gracefulness is achieved by a *diminuendo* slide.

The minuet (*see also* Op. 20, no. 1 *above*) and finale maintain the work's rhythmic approach, the former with its 5+5 structure. The crucial bar is the fourth: in order to clarify the rhythmic situation, a slight hesitation is indicated at this climactic stage, registering as it were the compression which the asymmetrical structure signifies. There is no need for the second violin to be perceptibly overjoyed at its quasi-solo entry into the trio; the tune plays itself, and the first violin must remain clearly audible (which is not to say that it ought to scan or play *espressivo*).

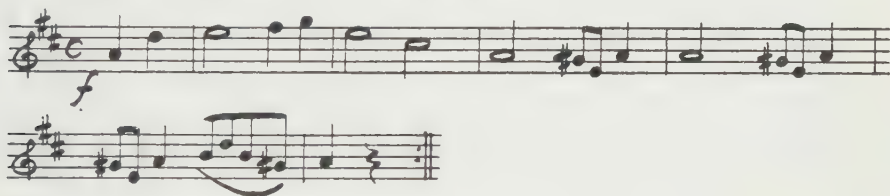
The D major Quartet, no. 4, is the first with a slow movement in variation form.

Some cellists have a chronic grudge against fate because they don't play first violin. Others, especially in this self-conscious age, react against this grudge by way of sophisticated musicality with a capital 'M', with the result that they play their solos with precious restraint. It must be stressed, therefore, that though the cello solo that is the second variation of this *Un poco adagio affettuoso* is marked *piano*, it is still a solo, and if differentiated dynamics had been in use at Haydn's time, he wouldn't have marked it *piano* anyway; as it is, he adds a *dolce*. In the third variation, the first fiddle must rid itself of any *rubato*-phobia once and for all.

The gipsy minuet is polyrhythmic and would have been notated polymetrically by a modern composer. So far as the tune (Ex. 3) is concerned, if you change the



'minuet' (admittedly at the back of the melody) into an exceedingly opposite dance form, namely, a gavotte, you can lose the *sforzatos*:



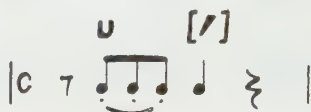
This, at any rate, holds true up to bar 4½ after the double bar, when the 'one-two', which in any case hides behind the gavotte rhythm's 'three-four', usurps it temporarily. In the cello and viola, the minuet background is more strongly implied, yet no more than implied, for at the same time there is again a 4/4-rhythm which, however, does not coincide with that of the upper parts (start the first main beat as 'one'). In sum—and this has to be remembered whatever else is forgotten—in each part, the cross-accented invariably mark a 4/4-scheme; they are never 3 beats apart.

The trio is not a piece of programme music describing a sewing-machine, and both its contrast with the principal section and the contrast between its reprise and its own middle section have to be introduced by a slight and varied hesitation in the cello. Such hesitations always have to decrease in the repeats and recapitulations, because the first surprise is the biggest. And whereas the contrast of the reprise is retained in the second repeat, the contrast which the opening forms to the principal section obviously vanishes in the first repeat, where the hesitation will therefore have to be reduced to vanishing point too.

The upbeat phrase of the finale—the whole first bar together with its own upbeat—only makes sense if it is played absolutely *senza misura*, emphatically *presto* (though

subdued in tone), and with only one aim in mind: bar 2. There is no accent before the other instruments enter. At the repeat, the accent-less *senza misura* extends over almost 2 bars: it includes three quarters of the *prima volta* bar.

Haydn's F minor has to be approached with the same reverence as Mozart's G minor or Beethoven's C minor. Op. 20, no. 5 is not a very difficult quartet (at any rate, it is easier than the other F minor, Op. 55, no. 2 (*see (10) below*), but any failure in natural musicality would be calamitous. Perhaps the most critical point, one that is not confined to this work nor indeed to Haydn, is nothing more complicated than the quaver accompaniment in the first movement. This problem is at its most glaring at the (*allegro*) *moderato* level. If you play several notes of equal pitch with, physically speaking, equal stresses, the first will, for psychological reasons, sound the strongest. If, therefore, it does not demand a rhythmic accent, you have to de-accentuate it carefully, which means in Schoenberg's symbolology—



—and never mind the first dot: Haydn's slur counteracts it anyway. Otherwise, you irreparably inhibit the flow of the melody.

In the fugue (*see Op. 20, no. 2 above*) it must again be remembered that there is no loudness before the canon starts, i.e. 40 bars before the end.

No. 6 in A major, though very great music, is not altogether unproblematic from the textural and playing point of view. I do not think one should attempt it before feeling very safe in the realm of the Haydn quartet. (*See also Op. 20, no. 2 above and (5), Op. 33, no. 3 below.*)

(5) Op. 33, Nos. 1-6 (The 'Scherzo' Quartets)

Very curiously, both B minor Quartets—the first of the present set and Op. 64, no. 2—start off as if they were in D major and thus represent in embryo what, in the remotest future, was to be called 'progressive tonality' (apropos of Mahler: see Dika Newlin, *Bruckner, Mahler, Schoenberg*, New York, 1947).

It is not perhaps unnecessary to point out that in the trio of the present B minor Quartet, one should not technically be aware of the fact that the music is in B major and modulates to F sharp major: there are two types of difficulties, those which are part of the composition (Beethoven, Brahms!) and those which aren't, and in the present instance they aren't.

As for the *sforzatos* in the *Andante*, the best approach to the meaning of dynamic and rhythmic marks is to imagine how one would tend to play the passage in question if they weren't there. If there were no *sforzato* on the principal beat of the third bar, we might well thoughtlessly follow the metrical upbeat to bar 1 by an accent on the first beat. In musical reality, however, this is still an upbeat phrase, and all the *sforzato* at the beginning of bar 2 means is—no accent at the beginning of bar one! Any exaggerated pushing is therefore quite out of place; if Haydn had known the

de-accentuation sign used in our examples, he would have put it over the first beat of bar 1 instead.³

No. 2 in E flat is the famous 'Joke'. For the phrasing of the first movement's theme, see (2) above with reference to Ex. 1 and (4) above with reference to Ex. 5; only, since the quaver accompaniment does not aim at a crotchet on a strong beat, it is the second quaver that takes what there unavoidably is of an accent. Trio: for the *glissandos*, see, *mutatis mutandis*, (4), Op. 20, no. 3 above.

The interpretation of the 'joke' itself has to be alive to the facts that Haydn changes his tune with the fifth phrase (see the beginning of the movement), and that the last phrase of all represents, as it were, a half-hearted attempt to play the repeat, i.e. the first two bars of the movement, with which the 'joke' has started. In other words, the 'joke' is on the first sentence of the movement as distinct from the returns of the rondo theme. To my knowledge, this is the first great structuralization of a process of formal disintegration. The new field of expression thus entered was never to be approached by Mozart, whose character always urged in the opposite direction. It was Beethoven who continued the exploration, though hardly by way of imitation: his first great advance into this field, the end of the *Eroica's* funeral march, is no joke.

No. 3 in C major, the celebrated 'Bird', seems to be the first symphonic structure to start with the accompaniment of its theme—a procedure which led over such works as Mozart's G minor Symphony, Beethoven's Ninth, Schubert's A minor Quartet, Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto and several of his string quartets, to the symphonies of Bruckner and indeed beyond (Schoenberg's Third Quartet, for instance). The purpose is to increase the range of a movement's tension, an ever more urgent purpose in proportion as themes themselves came to unfold on higher levels of tension, owing chiefly to the development of harmony and the rising norms of consonance and dissonance. This as yet unobserved phenomenon is awaiting detailed examination.

The second subject of the first movement can hardly be introduced without *rubato* on the upbeat phrase; the contrast does not otherwise make sense. The free upbeat should incorporate a *diminuendo* rather than a *crescendo*, in order to prepare both for the dynamic level of the entire second subject and for the lightened 'bird' texture, i.e. the two violins which are to resume and expand their two-part activity in the trio of the *Scherzo*. The climactic phrase of the theme, where the crushed notes appear in the rhythmic diminution produced by the quavers, ought to be given its full and witty value so far as the *acciaccaturas* themselves are concerned, with more of a fuss over the first than over the second; the second violin has to support this deliberate execution by a miniature *tenuto* on the *b*" and, less so, of course, on the *a*".

For the *sforzatos* in all four movements, compare Op. 33, no. 1 above. The principal section of the *Scherzo* is intended *sopra una corda* in all four parts; the precedent is the trio of the previous set's A major Quartet. The low dynamic level should be strictly retained. The final rondo must be as fast as rhythmically calm—which means

³ Incidentally, many of Haydn's mere accents appear as *sforzatos* in print—not to speak of the *sforzatos* habitually added by copyists under syncopations.

very fast. There is no objection to a thrown down-bow *staccato* in the semiquavers at the end, if imagination dictates it: in this very fast *tempo* the respective two instruments cannot help being together, and the virtuoso touch is not as such unmusical in chamber music. What is far more unmusical is its unsubstantiated suppression, with nothing except a good-boy attitude to replace it.

The B flat Quartet, no. 4, is not up to the supreme standard of the rest, but the homotonal G major one, no. 5, will easily repay the closest study. In the recapitulation of the first movement the reader will be reminded of our remarks under (2) *above*, with reference to Ex. 1. In the *Largo*, the second violin has to avoid both over-distinctness and the contemporary malaise—*sempre espressivo*. The necessary flexibility ensues automatically if, in one's mind, one plays the first-violin part too. The amazing rhythmic structure of the *Scherzo* is clearly stressed by Haydn's dynamics: the whole antecedent is an upbeat to its last note. The final variations on a *siciliano* theme will not fail to remind players of the finale of Mozart's great D minor Quartet, dedicated to Haydn. Here as there, the *tempo* has to take the eventual speed-up into account.

No. 6 in D major, likewise homotonal, will not take kindly to accents on the half-bar in the *Andante*; again Haydn's dynamics try their utmost to prevent them anyway (see also Op. 33, no. 1 *above*). For the quaver accompaniment, see (4) *above* with reference to Ex. 5 and Op. 33, no. 2 *above*.

(6) Op. 42

The lone D minor Quartet is both great and very simple; it thus forms an ideal stepping-stone to the complex masterpieces. A rough parallel is Mozart's C major piano Sonata, K.545. Phrasing most easily goes wrong at the very beginning, where the first note of model and sequence is the main note; the rest of the phrase is after-beat, epilogue. Once again, the sole purpose of the *sforzato* is to de-accentuate the middle of the bar (cf. (5), Op. 33, no. 1 *above*, though now it is a downbeat phrase, not an upbeat one, which the *sforzato* clarifies). At the same time, there is a subtle difference between the model and the sequence: in the sequence, the three quavers do come to assume upbeat significance in regard to the consequent. But this is the crucial surprise of the sentence, and it would be foolish to destroy it by making the upbeat drive immediately manifest; besides, one cannot contradict the model to the point of inconsistency. It is quite enough to know inwardly that the structural function of the three quavers is changing, and, for the rest, to keep the phrasing of the model alive.

(7) Op. 50, Nos. 1-6

No. 1 in B flat again begins with the accompaniment (see (5), Op. 33, no. 3 *above*), a rhythmic tonic pedal this time, creating the impression of a suppressed model for the ensuing sequences. Thus, the first violin has to start as if it continued something which it hasn't in fact been playing. The first *sforzato* of the *Adagio non lento* has more positive significance than the next two, which only re-establish the bar-accent, add the half-bar accent, and define the respective upbeats: if these are played as such, they fulfil the *sforzatos'* entire function (cf. (5), Op. 33, no. 1 *above*). The cross-

accent of the first *sforzato*, on the other hand, has to be played in view of its as yet hidden meaning in the first variation where, on the second violin, it becomes a model for the first violin's imitation.

In the *Adagio* of no. 2 in C major, the second violin must resign itself to the fact that its solo prepares for the first's. There is no musical point, then, in forcing the beginning and trying to play it in the grand style. The attempt would be doomed to failure anyway, because the first fiddle plays in the upper octave where the theme lies better and sounds better, and, most important of all, the harmonization of the restatement's first bar beats any previous attempt at a grand first statement out of existence. The second subject, too, must be stressedly *piano*; players may be assured that it cannot fail to make itself heard under the inverted dominant pedal.

In the minuet, the leaps can, as occasion arises, be taken *glissando* in order to support the *sforzato* on the first beat and stress the strain of the leap—if, that is, the players are sufficiently uninhibited in this respect (*cf.* (4), *Op. 20, no. 3 above*) not to be nervous on the one hand or, by way of over-compensation, vulgar on the other. Of course, any *glissando* approach must be established at the very beginning, in which case an imperceptible *tenuto* on the upbeat will help to define the basic idea behind the interpretation. Almost all the leaps are between two strings, and a sensitive 'gipsy *glissando*' (with the finger of the new note) will occasionally be to the point. In case the orthodox reader recoils in horror, I may remind him that the new (Flesch) orthodoxy is more perceptive than the old. In the first volume of his *Art of Violin Playing*, Flesch writes about the 'gipsy *glissando*', which he calls the 'L-portamento', as opposed to the conventional, 'tasteful' one, which he calls the 'B-portamento':

When we consult the best-known violin methods with regard to this point, we are obliged to admit that all their authors, without exception, recognize the *B-portamento* as the only road to salvation, while the *L-portamento*, on the other hand, is excommunicated as a devilish invention of bad taste. This ostracism reminds us of a similar occurrence, when, nearly two centuries ago, Leopold Mozart stigmatized the *spiccato* as an 'indecent' bowing!

In this field, however, there exists an intimate inter-connection between individual taste and technical execution, since the latter, in a way, is the logical sequence of the former, and is absolutely dependent upon it.

If the viola wants to participate in the gliding venture, it will find itself involved in a *glissando* from *g* to *g'*. In this instance, I would not recommend an artificial manoeuvre involving a change of string, which is almost bound to sound self-conscious, 'good technique' and nothing else; the natural thing to do is to employ a sham *glissando* from the open string, gliding, that is to say, with the first finger which comes in from nowhere just below *ab* and thus pretends to have played the *g*.

The *Allegro con brio* over the opening movement of the E flat Quartet (No. 3) should not induce an exaggerated speed; rather have a look at the character of the 6/8 theme. The sequences, that is to say, articulate the half-bar very strongly. Second violin and viola are quite right if they think they are important in the trio; they are wrong if they think they have to outplay the first violin. The first remains leader; the second, as sub-leader, has to look after an easy and flexible quaver movement.

Haydn's only F sharp minor Quartet, *Op. 50, no. 4* cannot be played by a

quartet which has not been playing Haydn together for years. (See also (4), *Op. 20, no. 2 above*.) No. 5 in F major, on the other hand, is one of the easier masterpieces, inasmuch as the texture blends readily. In the sextuplets of the first movement, we might have second thoughts about Leopold Mozart's attitude towards the *spiccato*, for a well-phrased *détaché* is better than a wrist-conscious *spiccato* at any time. The undeniable satisfaction which a good *spiccato* produces in the player easily tends to overshadow the structural requirements of the passage he is playing.

No. 6 in D major is the famous 'Frog'; like the D major Quartets from *Op. 20* and *Op. 33*, but unlike the later D major Quartets, it is homotonal. On the whole, the phrasing cannot easily go haywire here, except in the principal section of the minuet (see also (4), *Op. 20, no. 1 above*), where the first violin will have to avoid the bar-accent at all costs during the downward drive of the little conjunct two-note motif, despite the chordal punctuations in the lower parts. The sole immediate aim of the passage is the tiny turn to the subdominant, stressed by the *sforzato*, and if the player is unambiguously conscious of the structure, he can certainly afford to play this rush-down *senza misura*, with what one might call well-measured haste, i.e. just a little too fast; the chords will have to follow suit unobtrusively. In order to restore the rhythmic equilibrium, generous value will then have to be given to the dotted minim and to the rests before the cadential phrase, and a minute *ritardando* felt if not played where the motif moves up again, so that the total time needed for the first repeat will be the same as that of a *tempo giusto*. The stretch for the viola in the finale's last frog croak is very unpleasant if the player has small hands and/or is maltreated by an outsized modern instrument. Artistically speaking, there is no harm in hearing a bit of difficulty here, but rather than practise himself into a muscular inflammation, he might cheat and produce the notes on one string; if he has imagination he will be able, within the total texture, to simulate the necessary sound (on the C-string, not on the G-string).

(8) *Op. 51, Nos. 1-7*

The Seven Words of Our Saviour on the Cross cannot possibly be called string quartets; besides, no natural musician will readily play seven successive slow instrumental movements (until the thunderstorm eventually ensues), if no extra-musical purpose is involved. The passion shown by certain ensembles for this work at the expense of Haydn's genuine quartets is a definite sign that they have not even begun to understand the true nature of the string quartet.

(9) *Op. 54, Nos. 1-3*

No. 1 in G major is one of the most frequently played of the 'Celebrated'; where there are asymmetries or irregularities (such as the 5+5 of the minuet), they are sufficiently concealed to make the more superficial layers of the work easily accessible; nor does it confront us with any particular interpretational problems.

No. 2 in G major, however, contains one of the most astounding slow movements ever written—a very profound assimilation of gipsy style, probably the profoundest ever. (The second place might be granted to the slow movement from Brahms's Clarinet Quintet, his only success in this direction, though indeed a sovereign one.)

Although, in principle, all the *rubatos* are written out in the first violin part, a quartet which really knows the movement will be able to afford additional agogic shadings; but of course the lower instruments, and above all the second violin, have to be dead sure of every note the first violin is playing. The leader must be really free to rhapsodize, inhibited only by the consideration that his own freedom can already be found in clear rhythmic outline in the note-values which he has to bring to life. The movement has proved 'quite a job', even for very experienced, first-rate players. At the same time, it is no empty statement to say that when you know it, there is no difficulty at all: metrically speaking, you can then play it in your sleep. For the sake of the experiment, I have taught it to amateur players, who came to render it better than some professionals or advanced students.

Finale, *Adagio* section: 'Carmirelli bowing' in the middle parts (*see* (4), *Op. 20, no. 2 above*).

No. 3, Haydn's only mature E major Quartet, is as difficult as Mozart's E major Piano Trio, and as outstanding—which means more outstanding, because it is a quartet. But the difficulties are almost exclusively technical. *Largo cantabile*, middle section: 'Carmirelli bowing' in the lower parts, with the most concentrated attention to the flights of the first violin's imagination. In the excitement of opening the finale with a solo, the second violin sometimes accents the second halves of the first, third and fifth bars. This should not, of course, happen; aim at the second and fourth bars. The sixth is itself only half an aim, because the structure drives on after the sequences.

(10) *Op. 55, Nos. 1-3*

No. 1, the fourth of the A major quartets, is definitely the most immediately recommended for study. To some extent, our remarks in the case of the accompaniment to the theme in the first movement of *Op. 33, no. 2* (*see* (5) *above*) apply to the theme's middle parts; only, this time it is crotchets instead of quavers, and their pitch is not identical: it is in fact a subordinate phrase. Consequently, the third beat takes a real accent, except in bar 3, where the three crotchets form a pure upbeat phrase to bar 4, whose own, more manifest (*legato*) upbeat phrase they thus foreshadow. But let not the turn produce any accent whatever! *Mutatis mutandis*, the second-violin solo that opens the *Adagio cantabile* might heed our remarks about the *Adagio* of *Op. 50, no. 2* ((7) *above*). The first bar-line of the finale has no rhythmic significance, and the second less than the third.

No. 2, the second F minor Quartet, homotonal like the first (*see* (4), *Op. 20, no. 5 above*), must not be allowed to go to sleep over the inner parts' semiquaver movement in the *alternativo* major-mode variations of the slow movement (which this time comes first!). Flow and blend—don't play 'beautifully' and thus destroy the beauty of the melody. When phrasing the first part of the trio, it may prove fruitful to remind oneself that it is in F minor so long as there is no harmony, and turns to the relative major as soon as there is. Rosemary Hughes thinks this quartet is neglected because 'its pungency places [it] outside the range of expression regarded as representative of Haydn by our "type-casting" habits of mind'. I agree about the

pungency, but as for the neglect, I would suggest that it is the difficulty of the quick movements—the second and fourth—which frightens people off. At the same time, it must be stressed that the textures are not as such problematic. I have myself frightened players off one or two quartets in the preceding pages, but I should never include the present work in our temporary black list. The one thing which has to be avoided throughout the work is any hint of rough playing.

No. 3 in B flat is too 'celebrated' for words—an overwhelming masterpiece nevertheless, and not too difficult to realize in a comparatively short time of study, except for a few passages in the finale, which need hardly be pointed out.

(11) Op. 64, Nos. 1-6

The C major Quartet, the first of this set, is still easier than the last quartet of the preceding one, except for one or two tricky passages which soon lose their terror on closer acquaintance. It is recommended as stepping-stone no. 2 into the great Haydn—after the D minor Quartet, Op. 42. The slow movement is not a slow movement and must not deteriorate into one.

For no. 2, the second B minor Quartet, *see (5) above*. Rosemary Hughes explains its neglect in the same way as the second F minor's (*see (10) above*). I for my part would repeat my own explanation, except that this time the texture itself is problematic too, not in the sense that it is badly written, but simply because the originality of the work, exceptional even for Haydn, expresses itself in a most unusual treatment of the medium, which entails quite a few pitfalls for the ensemble. Tovey, too, justly calls it 'a great work unduly neglected'; nevertheless, I would advise any but a mature Haydn ensemble to continue neglecting it: after all, it is better not to play a work than to play it very badly. If chamber music survives, the Haydn quartets will come into their own again, and works such as the present one will be rediscovered at the proper stage of interpretative development.

No. 3 in B flat is an entirely different proposition; here one has to assume that people never got beyond the shock of the opening 5-bar sentence. To emphasize the rhythmic meaning of the contrasting *ostinato* motif of a short quaver and two slurred semiquavers, I would suggest starting the passage off with an imperceptible metrical distortion—a slight extension of the break between the long note and the short ones, whence their value will of course be very slightly decreased. (I realize that as soon as one formulates such advice in words, it tends to be exaggerated.)

In the *Adagio*, the second violin must not forget that its solo bars in the principal section proceed under the first's held notes: there is no need whatever to force the dynamics (*mezza voce*).

For the accompaniment of the basic phrase of no. 4 in G major, *cf. (4), Op. 20, no. 5; (5), Op. 33, no. 2; and (10), Op. 55, no. 1 above*. The melody itself aims at the second bar and recedes, falls off, after the accent on the third. The *sopra una corda* of the *codetta* and *coda* invites a hesitation on the upbeat prior to the first *glissando* ('B-portamento'). Likewise, the contrasting *piano* character of the minuet's consequent can hardly materialize without a little lingering over the upbeat; the ensuing melody

is of course much calmer than the more rhythmic antecedent. It is absolutely essential that after the double bar, as the miniature development section begins, the second violin continues at *piano* level. For the trio, *see* (1) *above*. Once again, the leader must feel free—even to hasten somewhat at the beginning of model and sequence in the trio's own development section, and to hesitate over the lead-back. For the accompaniment of the *Adagio*'s principal section, *cf.* (10), *Op. 55, no. 2 above*.

The universally popular 'Lark' (no. 5 in D major) is square and easy in its phraseology, except perhaps for the syncopations of the second subject, which have to be played as if the bar-lines had been displaced. *Sforzatos* continue to displace the bar accent where it would otherwise threaten to return altogether to normal; nevertheless, enough metrical normality comes to the fore at this point to make the poly-rhythmic struggle between foreground and background acute. It is finally resolved by way of the three-crotchet upbeat, *subito piano*, which must therefore be clearly articulated as against its immediately preceding model: a slight comma is what is needed in order to restore the rhythmic balance.

No. 6 in E flat is another widely played work (always comparatively speaking). It is again easy to understand and play, except for the slightly uncomfortable key, whose opaque colour should not however be counter-acted: it is part of the music's character. *Andante*'s middle section: 'Carmirelli bowing' in the accompaniment; great restraint!

The grace notes in the trio are meant to be the starting-points for graceful *glissandos* (*cf.* (4), *Op. 20, no. 3 above*); in other words, both first and later second violin have to play the theme on the A-string throughout. The quaver accompaniment, meanwhile, has to adjust itself most tactfully and unobtrusively: there is no need to do more about the slurs than just play them.

(12) *Op. 71, Nos. 1-3*

The B flat Quartet, no. 1, is in what one might describe as Haydn's 'grand' style; technical difficulties apart, it is comparatively unproblematic. No. 2 in D major, too, poses few musical problems to spontaneous music-making; a touch of vulgarity, tastefully executed, will not come amiss when, in the minuet, the first violin changes the cello's opening downbeat phrase into an upbeat to the full texture: even the basic contrast with the trio is thus immediately established. The final *Allegretto* has to keep the ultimate *Allegro* in mind; and again, in order to stress the contrast from the outset and establish the *tempo* character in no uncertain manner, it is advisable to creep into the theme at the beginning by way of an upbeat expressing astonished reluctance (the theme is surprising enough in all conscience).

In the theme of no. 3 in E flat we encounter another 'aside', or echoing off-stage effect (*cf.* (4), *Op. 20, no. 3 above*). The humour is pre-conditioned by the early turn to the dominant: no wonder Haydn starts with a *forte* chord which drives the home key home. Imagination is needed to tell the joke and vary it. In instances such as the present, it is, I think, a mistake to formulate prescriptions before the

players have had a chance to make up their own minds. Scripted jokes are liable to lose some of their flavour.

(13) Op. 74, Nos. 1-3

After what has been said about the most realistic approach to dynamic marks (see (5), *Op. 33, no. 1 above*), the first movement of no. 1 in C major should be plain sailing; Haydn here clarifies his structural intentions very carefully. In the *Andantino* there is, so far as tone quality is concerned, a nasty bar for the viola—the fifth. Consistency with the first violin's opening (well placed on the G-string) has to be the prime consideration. Unless his instrument can boast a very good C-string (the rarest of occurrences), he will find that the *c'* and *a* had better be played on the G-string. If handled carefully, the difference in colour of the first *f#* on the C-string doesn't matter so much because the note is the leading-note in a normal, close root position of the dominant seventh, and the second *f#*, which admittedly is solo, does not matter all that much either, because a corresponding contrast is remembered from the first violin's progress from *b* to the open G-string. Of course, if you start vibrating strenuously on the *f#* in order to hide your embarrassment about the change of string (how shaming to play this in the first position), everything is lost. It must be remembered that in any case, an even and none too *vibrato* tone is required for the upbeat phrase.

The finale is one of those cases where the lower instruments have the time of their lives: brilliant semiquaver passages in the *fugato* development which—as no listener suspects—are really very easy to play. The second violin, in particular, coming (temporally speaking) on top of the lower two and turning into a D minor that plays itself, for once outshines everybody—maybe even the first violin which, when it finally takes over, does not find things quite so easy. But do not force the pleasure, or you will spoil it (amongst other things, because you will use too much bow). For the rest, this is one of the sections which it should be obligatory for contemporary composers to study if they are thinking of brilliant quartet writing.

No. 2, the popular F major Quartet, is a suitable introduction to the greatest Haydn for an inexperienced second fiddler, even though—or rather, partly because—in the second variation of the *Andante grazioso*, he will have to cope with a solo in B flat minor which, however, does not lie badly.

No. 3 in G minor is the celebrated 'Rider'. The opening octave unison has to be phrased: it rarely is. The low notes give the basic line; the others recede despite their *acciaccaturas* and the *forte* level. The ensuing viola entry (in the close second position, please, which there is plenty of time to make sure of) must start with a clear upbeat phrase; the same goes, of course, for the upper instruments. Stem the flow of the music as you come up against the same upbeat's new meaning at the beginning of the second subject which, incidentally, can hardly be played very fast if the *glissandos* (see (4), *Op. 20, no. 3 above*) are not to become tasteless; in short, it bears *grazioso* character. This particular contrast between the subjects is resumed by the 'riding' finale, whose recapitulatory metamorphosis into the tonic major it makes indeed possible. For the trio's leaps, see (7), *Op. 50, no. 2 (minuet) above*.

(14) Op. 76, Nos. 1-6

No. 1, the almost equally celebrated G major Quartet, has a minor-mode finale, as has no. 3, the C major 'Emperor'. With the Picardy third (whose formal extension produces the major-mode finale of a work in the minor) relatively fresh in his mind, Haydn here attempts, and succeeds in, the far more difficult, opposite harmonic build-up, though he does heed the Picardy third to the extent of ending in the major. Only Mendelssohn ('Italian' Symphony) and Brahms (F major Symphony, first violin Sonata, B major Trio) followed the example of this new approach; it has not been tried in any other string quartets.

So far as no. 1 is concerned, the most usual misinterpretation is that of the minuet, whose *presto* character is often flatly disregarded (*see (4), Op. 20, no. 1 above*). The trio, on the other hand, is often taken faster, whereas it is in fact slower and not *tempo giusto* either: the structure is pointless without agogic freedom of melody. For the accompaniment, *see (1) above*.

No. 2, the homotonal 'Fifths' in D minor, shows the influence of Mozart's even more famous D minor Quartet, and the problem of the theme's accompaniment is the same (*see (5), Op. 33, no. 2 above*). I have not yet heard the lower-part syncopations of the *coda* to the first movement played correctly in public performance. Viola and cello must be heard to interrupt the second violin and *vice versa*, and the interrupted instruments must, with their *crescendos*, help as much towards the audibility of the interruption as the interrupting ones. The first fiddle, finally, has to have a precise idea of what's going on below, and there is no time to recover from the shock of it all in the third bar, where the beats, half-beats, and de-accentuated semiquaver upbeat phrases (second violin and cello) have to ensue in the strictest rhythm in order to introduce the upward-drive towards what is the compressed emotional climax of the entire movement. Ideally, these few bars might be memorized in score.

The 'Emperor's' fame is not perhaps quite commensurate with its greatness (it is not among the greatest of the great), but the 'Sunrise's' is. This is no. 4 in B flat major, whose first movement starts with a sustained, accompanimental tonic chord (which has to enter from nowhere) and foreshadows, with its gradual evolution, the first movement of Beethoven's F major Quartet from Op. 59. The finale's *Allegro ma non troppo* should not induce a thoughtless common-time accent on the third beat.

No. 5 in D major has the famous *Largo* in F sharp major which has to be, and can be, in tune. (There are great composer's pieces which can't—the larger part of Mozart's last string quintet, for instance, the slow movement, of course, excepted.) When the viola arrives at its profoundest solo in all Haydn (which, I am sure, Bruckner assimilated), the violins have to get ready for the most ethereal variety of 'Carmirelli bowing' (*see (4), Op. 20, no. 2 above*), in which the viola itself joins as the cello takes over. What I said about the lower instruments' brilliant passages in the finale of Op. 74, no. 1 (*see (13) above*) is doubly true of the second violin's semiquaver passage in the present finale. If the listener or, for that matter, one's own quartet members only knew how easy this dazzling virtuoso display is! One of the

most outstanding students at the Summer School duly (if jokingly) reproached me with giving away the secret.

No. 6 in E flat is amongst the very greatest of the celebrated quartets. The slow movement is so 'modern' harmonically that it begins without key signature; it is only at the double bar that Haydn notates the home and opening key—B major—which, in the preceding excursions, would have proved impractical to the point of absurdity. The work is not problematic once one knows it, but it remains difficult.

(15) Op. 77, Nos. 1-2

Both these are celebrated, the second in F major in more editions than the first in G major, without, of course, being greater. For some reason or other, in fact, the F major has repeatedly been described as 'Haydn's most beautiful quartet'; the observation is meaningless, though the work is certainly *inter primos inter pares*.

The opening movement of the G major is composed against the background of a march; it is not a march. (Cf. also our remarks on Haydn's minuets under (4), Op. 20, no. 1). The character is implied by the *subito piano* on the second beat and defined by the first melodic motif; how, after that, one can still think of an overtly martial approach is incomprehensible. The work is not so difficult as it looks.

The F major Quartet has everything one could wish for—great originality combined with comparatively easy accessibility, great virtuosity combined with comparatively easy playability. It constitutes a partial exception to our initial rule (see (III) above) regarding the celebrated quartets. Both minuet and finale contain far-reaching rhythmic complexities, however pleasantly hidden. A contemporary composer would have written the opening of the finale (after the pause) thus: 4/4, 2/4, 4/4, 2/4, 4/4, 2/4 (one bar of each), followed by 3/4—and there are cross-accented into this particular bargain too. Any sensible interpretation will certainly follow this implied scheme, though its intuitive realization would, of course, be enough.

(16) Op. 103

The final fragment is most moving, especially the *Andante grazioso*, but it cannot be adequately appreciated before Haydn's development as a quartet composer has been fully understood, and I think its interpretation might profitably be postponed until then. 'Full understanding', to be sure, leaves much un-understood; I agree with Tovey that 'we may be satisfied to seek out what Haydn has done for us without more than a mystic notion of how he did it.'

IV. CODA

I have given the general purpose of these necessarily selective notes in sections (I) and (II). There is a subsidiary, particular purpose: they are intended to provide some intermediate stimulation between this year's Summer School and next year's. 1959 happens to be a Haydn year as well as a Mendelssohn year—a very convenient coincidence from the string quartet's point of view, for the great Mendelssohn quartets are perhaps the only absolutely natural and masterly works of the *genre* in the entire

romantic era. That they are almost totally unknown is solely due to our crisis of chamber music. If you don't know what's wrong with the outer movements of at least two of the three Brahms quartets⁴ you can't possibly 'now what is masterly about the Mendelssohn quartets. As for their originality, its intensity is again almost unique in romantic chamber music. Of course he was no Beethoven, but then, who was, except for Haydn?

The class in the interpretation of the Haydn quartets, then, will next year be extended to cover the Mendelssohn quartets too. This joint class will be linked with a master class in analysis, primarily intended for composers, though everybody will be welcome to take active part who is sufficiently qualified to be genuinely interested. By way of preparation for both classes as well as for more general musical reasons, I shall submit an article on Mendelssohn's string quartets in the next July issue of this journal.

⁴ From what I know of this great composer's psychology, I suspect that some of the quartets he destroyed were better.

LETTERS OF WEBERN AND SCHOENBERG

(TO ROBERTO GERHARD)

*From Webern*Mödling bei Wien
Neusiedlerstrasse 58

22.XI.1931

... These programmes are not meant to be final; I shall of course go on thinking about them. In any case I would also very much like to conduct a Mahler or a Bruckner symphony (perhaps both, if there are two concerts). Your wife told us that you've got a brilliant soprano, who would be exactly right for the soprano solo in Mahler's IVth; that would be excellent, since there is no better introduction to Mahler than this particular symphony. It is bound to be a success. One need not worry in the least!!!!

The same applies to Bruckner's fourth!

The most suitable Schoenberg would be *Verklaerte Nacht*, though it is essential of course to have good strings. But if it can be pre-rehearsed, it will certainly be possible.

*Praeludium und Fuge*¹ needs a lot of woodwind, including 6 clarinets; are these available?

The most suitable of my own seems to me the *Passacaglia*.

Schubert's *German Dances* mentioned in the list are the ones discovered only this spring in Vienna: U.E. commissioned me to set them for small orchestra. The score has just been published and quite a number of performances have already been announced for the beginning of the season. I think it would be a very good idea to do them! As to Berg, one might possibly consider doing the *Wozzeck* fragments, if the singer in question could cope; otherwise unfortunately nothing else. Yes, also the '*frühen Lieder*'!!!! Those would go very well!!!!

Now, concerning the fee: I'm certainly prepared to be accommodating, so please make an offer. The only thing I must know is whether it is a question of *one* or *two* concerts. My suggestion would be: for *one* concert 1,000 Austrian Schillings plus travelling expenses; for *two* concerts 1,000 Marks plus travelling expenses; remember that the journey alone will take me almost a week!

If the people down there have absolutely got to see something printed about me, you can show them the U.E. leaflet that I'm enclosing. There is also an article about me by Stein in the last issue of *Anbruch*.

You may refer too to the fact that I am permanent conductor of the *Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzerte* and of the Vienna Radio, that for many years I have conducted regularly in London and for several German radio stations, and so on. But seriously, you don't mean to say that people in Spain have yet to find out about me? If Spain were Vienna, then I would understand! . . .

¹ Schoenberg's orchestration (1928) of Bach's *St. Anne* Prelude and Fugue in E flat, for organ.

Wien, XIII.

Penzingerstrasse 82/1 St.

13.I.1932

... here, at last, my new programme-suggestions.

With the best will in the world I was unable to comply with the point you recently made about *putting the shorter pieces at the end*. I'll explain this in connexion with the individual programmes:

First Concert

1. Beethoven: Leonora Overture No. 3. *ca.* 10'
2. Schubert: B minor Symphony. 20' (alternatively, if Steuermann comes:
Beethoven: E flat Concerto. 30' or Mozart: E flat Concerto Köchel No. 271.
25')
3. Schoenberg: Begleitungsmusik zu einer Lichtspielszene, op. 34. *ca.* 8'
4. Mahler: 1st Symphony. *ca.* 55'—in all, a good 90'

Now consider for a moment: If I put the Mahler symphony in the middle, what could possibly follow *that* last movement? Schoenberg must come *before*; to place him after the long symphony would, in my opinion, be most unsuitable, in fact impossible. I might have the following order: (1) Beethoven: Leonora No. 3, (2) Schoenberg—(3) Mahler—but, what now? What could link up with that in the way of shorter pieces? Of course, one could go to the opposite extreme: possibly Schubert: Ballet music and a Strauss Waltz. But I hate winding up a programme in such a *revue*-manner. Whereas this particular Mahler symphony makes a *brilliant* close to a concert, with that gigantic climax of sound at the end! And isn't this programme very good *in itself*? Do discuss it with Schoenberg.

I would also like to know as soon as possible whether we can count on Steuermann being engaged.

Second Concert

1. Mozart: E flat or C major (*Jupiter*) Symphony. 30'
2. Webern: Passacaglia Op. 1. *ca.* 10'
3. Schubert-Webern: German Dances of October 1824. *ca.* 9'
4. Webern: Six Pieces for Orchestra, op. 6, *circa* (*gute* cancelled, above it *gegen*) 20'²
5. Beethoven: VIIth Symphony or Haydn D major (*The Clock*). 30' or 25'

Again: my pieces are shorter pieces; but should I play them only after two symphonies, when the audience may already be tired? And I would have to have longer works preceding them, otherwise the concert would be too short! So, I must have them in the middle. But I couldn't go on, after that, with more shorter pieces; therefore we must again have a longer work at the end. To include my own songs with orchestra, as you suggest, would considerably increase the number of necessary rehearsals. These songs are extremely difficult. Don't you think the choice I have made of my own works is quite good and sufficient? And they seem to go well between two classical symphonies. Furthermore, either Beethoven's VIIth or Haydn's *Clock* would make a brilliant ending. The latter is an uncommonly varied piece, full of interesting details (of an instrumental nature). Is it often played in

² Webern's timing of op. 6 is surprising. The figure 20 is a correction of a previous estimate which looks like 15; then *gute* is cancelled and he writes above it *gegen*, i.e. nearly 20. In fact the duration of op. 6 is under 10 minutes.

Spain? I'd very much like to do it! If the Schubert B minor were left over because of Steuermann taking part, it could go in the second programme; which could then look like this:

- | | | |
|-----------------------------------|----|-------------------------------|
| 1. Mozart: Symph. | | 1. Mozart |
| 2. Schubert: B minor | OR | 2. Schubert: B minor |
| 3. Webern: Orchestral Pieces | | 3. Schubert-Webern: G. Dances |
| | | 4. Webern: Passacaglia |
| 4. Schubert-Webern: German Dances | | |
| 5. Webern: Passacaglia | | 5. Webern: Orchestral Pieces |

Rehearsals: 3 or 4 for each concert. Is that asking too much? Let me know about that too. . . .

Wien, XIII

Penzingerstrasse 82

6 May 1932

. . . How many lovely experiences that journey to Barcelona has brought me. The further my stay there recedes in time, the nearer it becomes, the more my thoughts are drawn to it!!! What a joy it was to make music with that orchestra; the sound of their performance of the Schubert B minor, amongst others, still remains with me as something supremely satisfying. I must say, I do really wish very much to *come again* and I should welcome it extraordinarily if this *début* were to bring in its wake an extended or even a regular activity in Barcelona. I say this in connexion with your remark that there is a chance that the concert activities of the orchestra may be considerably increased. Do you think that I might possibly be given the direction of some of these concerts?

If I came once or twice a season (maybe for several weeks at a time) it could be done. . . .

. . . If you see anyone in the orchestra: I send my most cordial greetings. Also to the gentleman who arranged business matters with us and the old gentleman who does the translations: I'm sorry I have forgotten their names.

Maria Enzersdorf

bei Wien, Im Auholz 8

Austria

4.II.33

. . . Your news about the Casals Orchestra and its possible nationalization, etc., does not surprise me a great deal: things in this respect are already in a bad way everywhere. Whether right or left makes no difference (during our recent 'revolution' it also looked at first as though many things might improve for us); where art is concerned they all fail. But maybe there will be better luck in your country. Yes, it would please me very much to come to Barcelona again. How about your own musical activities? You ought to see if you can't conduct. If you have a choir it is then easier to branch out into concert activity. You should try to get one, or even to found one yourself! It is a most satisfying job and in the end it also brings its own rewards. But naturally the main thing, the main goal, is to have as much time as possible, that is to say the entire time, for composing. . . .

. . . Up to Christmas I had three concerts here (amongst other things I did the Vth Mahler), then I was in Frankfurt, where I conducted classical works and my own Schubert Dances, and in April I shall go to London for two concerts with the B.B.C. In the meantime, I have one Arbeiter-Symphoniekonzert here in March and several other things. Schoenberg is coming to Vienna in a few days to give a lecture. You can imagine how glad we are. I haven't seen him since Barcelona. . . .

Maria Enzersdorf
bei Wien, Im Auholz 8

26.VI.33

Many thanks for your long letter from Barcelona and for the postcard from Amsterdam. I meant to write a long time ago! First of all: I am very glad that you were awarded part of the Hertzka Prize! Even if it's nothing much financially, it draws attention to you. Is the piece you submitted and then conducted in Amsterdam part of the choral work you told me last summer that you were planning to write? What I saw made an excellent impression!³ And I was very glad to hear that you had such a success with it in Amsterdam. . . .

If only a suitable position could be found for Schoenberg without delay!!!! I am really beside myself, I would never have thought that it could happen!!! One must now leave no stone unturned!!! I hope the concerts and lectures in Spain don't fall through!!! Do your utmost to achieve as much as possible. Forgive me for saying this, I know very well that you feel just as I do in this matter. I only wanted to indicate how worried I am!!! His last letter gave me only too clearly the impression that he himself doesn't consider his situation very optimistically at the moment. I don't yet know where he wants to stay for the summer, only that he wants to leave Paris.

Do you think he could possibly get a permanent teaching post in Barcelona? He is so happy in Spain. He would have to find a position similar to his former one, if possible of course even better, in order to have time to compose without the recent worries all over again. . . .

Maria Enzersdorf
bei Wien
Im Auholz 8

21 May 1934

. . . all that has happened to us this winter: on the one hand, our private trouble—Mali was in great pain till the end of January, but thank God she has been all right since then and has been declared completely fit again—and on the other hand, the political events of which I suppose you are sufficiently informed. I am feeling the consequences too . . .

. . . Will you be coming to Vienna this summer? That would be wonderful. There would be so much to talk about! What a state the world is in! Our responsibility grows and grows! That's why it is of such burning interest to me to know where every single one of us stands.

Now I have to make two requests: the first concerns Dr. Bach, who owing to the events just mentioned has lost almost every means of subsistence—we are extremely concerned about him—and he now proposes to become a correspondent for foreign papers and music magazines in order to earn a living! He wants me to ask you—he sends his cordial greetings—whether you could help him in this respect with Spanish music periodicals or something similar. What I mean is, to get Dr. Bach an appointment, permanent of course if possible, as correspondent on music in Vienna and Austria for one of your newspapers. Do please examine every possibility as quickly as you can and write directly to him: Dr. David Bach, Vienna VI, Mollardgasse 69.⁴ You would also be doing me a great personal favour if you could help him. It is a matter of the greatest urgency!!!

³ *L'Alta Naixença del Rei En Jaume*, cantata for choir, soli and orchestra. The 'Emil Hertzka Memorial Prize' (2,500 Schillings) was divided amongst five entrants: Roberto Gerhard, Norbert von Hannenheim, Julius Schloss, Leopold Spinner and Ludwig Zenk. Webern sat on the Jury.

⁴ Dr. David Josef Bach, an old personal friend of Schoenberg, was a socialist and as a councillor of the Vienna Municipality he had been the originator of many officially sponsored enterprises in the field of musical education in schools and institutions, such as the Symphony Concerts for working-class audiences of which Webern was the permanent conductor.

The second request concerns the Galimir Quartet, an excellent ensemble, in my opinion the best after Kolisch! They are brother and sisters: the brother plays first violin and the three sisters the other instruments. They are Jews, whose parents came as immigrants during the war, young people who—owing to the current wave of anti-semitism—find themselves in an increasingly difficult position, and are considering leaving the country. In fact, they too are thinking of Spain, either of settling there permanently or perhaps trying to get a temporary engagement. They want me to ask you how about Barcelona! Do you see any chance of them settling there and making a living through private lessons (on their respective instruments), as a quartet-ensemble or even as members of an orchestra? Could one get them an engagement as a string quartet to begin with? As I've already said, they are thoroughly to be recommended! They are quite first-class both technically and musically, and after Kolisch there is no-one who plays our music as they do. How should one advise them? I often hear from Schoenberg. At present he is in New York (earlier on he was in Boston) and must lead a very exhausting life. He may come over in the summer—we hope so. . . .

From Schoenberg

Paris
Hotel Regina
Place Rivoli 2

27.V.1933

I received yesterday the long expected 'leave of absence' from the Academy, which is equivalent to dismissal. So far, nothing has been said as to whether and to what extent my contract will be honoured. For the time being it would be rather awkward for me if I didn't get my pay; but I do hope that the very unequivocal stipulations of my contract won't be violated.

You will understand that it is now all the more urgent for me to know whether the Spanish concerts are likely to come off. I wrote to you a few days ago. Also to Pena and Casals. It is not an easy decision for me to take, because once in Spain all the negotiations from which I can expect some income are made so much more difficult, not only on account of the distance but also because of the irregularity of the postal services. Otherwise I would be there already! But first of all I should like to sell my *Cello Concerto*, my *Opera* and a drama, *Der biblische Weg*, to a publisher—I must provide for myself somehow, in case I had to come to Spain without having any engagements.

Would you make inquiries? At least I shall then know if the answer is in the negative.

I don't mean to say that in that case I would not come to Spain. But it is difficult to make a decision in a state of uncertainty. . . .

Pelham Hall,
1284, Beacon Street,
Brookline, Mass.

19 February 1934

I have been meaning to write to you for a long time, but have had so much work that it was quite impossible. I am now taking advantage of a few spare minutes, before catching a later train back to Boston. You know that I travel every week to New York and teach there for 6 or 7 hours. It's a great strain, I would never do it again. Add to that a climate that is deadly for me; but even healthy people are hardly able to survive it. From one day to the next the thermometer jumps or slumps

(literally) some 60° Fahrenheit, i.e. $\frac{5 \times 60}{9}$ Degrees Celsius = 33°!! We have temperatures of -15° to -25° every 4th or 5th day. True, it is supposed to be one of the worst years.

I have now got 9 pupils in New York and 7 in Boston. There are some really gifted ones among them. They are amazed at what I show them. I hope however to be much better off next year. Apparently there are several universities that would like to have me. We were interested if unfortunately not always cheered by everything you wrote. In any case, do greet Msgr. Anglès⁵ most cordially on our behalf. He is a really good friend. Most cordial greetings to Sra. Conxita too.⁶ That Casals has not yet been able to decide about the *Cello Concerto* is very regrettable. I am in fact seriously thinking of not coming back to Europe any more and would only do so if I had a whole series of concerts.—Imagine: we have just 'phoned to reserve seats for the journey, and have been told that because of snowdrifts—overnight—probably no train will reach Boston. Who knows how long we may now have to stay here!—What do you say to the terrible events in Austria? I am quite beside myself. We have cabled and received answers, but what does that mean? One knows what penalties there are for 'atrocities stories'. And I have many old friends who are socialists; Webern and Polnauer⁷ too are socialists! And I have no news whatever from Webern. Neither do I know anything definite about Trudi⁸ and Greissle and about Mama⁹ and Mitzi.¹⁰ On the other hand, Görgi¹¹ is not yet certain whether he will be able to live in Paris. He is thinking of taking advantage of a supposed offer by the Portuguese Government to distribute land in Africa to Jews, for colonization. Is there anything in it? I am still thinking of sending him to Spain. Because, even if I had to support him fully there, it would only cost a fraction (1/3-1/5) of what it would cost in Paris. Could you find out whether there would be any obstacle to his entry (and possibly Trudi's)? I give you their addresses: maybe you could send any favourable news directly. On second thoughts, not to Trudi, perhaps; it might arouse suspicion. Görgi's address is Hotel de la Lorraine, 6 Passage de Clichy, Paris.—Here in America I have conducted twice already: the first time in Cambridge (near Boston—I should have conducted the same programme in Boston itself next day, but fell ill) and in Chicago, where I also gave a lecture in English (on the method of composition with 12 notes). I wrote it in English myself!—American publishers are even more sluggish than Spanish. Ever since I came here I have had discussions with a publisher who is determined to bring out the *Harmonielehre*, and although we are quite agreed—for I am more concerned with a moral success than with any material advantage—it has not yet been possible to sign a contract! On the other hand I am thinking of publishing my essays and lectures. A big New York publisher is interested in them—but that too is probably going to last—an eternity! I have seen Varèse here. Will his projects materialize, do you think? . . .

Imagine: since Barcelona I have not been able to work on *Moses and Aron*! N.B. Regarding the *Cello Concerto*, I have decided to make it generally available for performance. Only, the material has to be acquired from myself and a performing fee must be paid.

⁵ Higinio Anglès, musicologist.

⁶ Mme. Conxita Badia d'Agusti, a pupil of Granados and a fine soprano.

⁷ An ex-pupil, in the Austrian Civil Service.

⁸ Mrs. Greissle, Schoenberg's daughter by his first marriage.

⁹ Mrs. Kolisch, Schoenberg's mother-in-law.

¹⁰ Mrs. Seligmann, Schoenberg's sister-in-law.

¹¹ Schoenberg's son by his first marriage.

THE PRINCIPLE OF ASSIMILATION

Susanne K. Langer

I have elsewhere considered the special character of vocal music at some length because it brought the problem of personal utterance into clearest focus. This, however, is not the only philosophical issue that arises peculiarly in the realm of song. A second and equally fundamental one is the much-debated principle of 'purity' of the artistic medium. For song is normally wedded to words. It probably began with the intonation of words, to make them more potent in prayer or magic. In earlier times, song and poetry are supposed to have been one, for all recitation was intoned. Throughout the history of music the importance of words has been asserted by one school and denied by another. The Italian *Camerati* regarded the conveyance of the words as the prime office of music; the popes have protested against elaborate anthems and cantatas which obscured the sacred texts, pulled them apart or overlapped the lines so that no sentence could be heard plainly. Gluck, in the famous dedication of *Alceste* to the Archduke Leopold of Tuscany, is supposed to have asserted the primacy of words over music in opera, though I do not think his statement should be taken to mean that the work is, in effect, poetry or even drama rather than music. Gluck is universally regarded as a composer, not a dramatist, nor an arranger of Calzabigi's poetry for the stage; and no one, to my knowledge, has ever spoken of the piece as Calzabigi's play with music by Gluck. This indicates that however superficially people may paraphrase the words of his preface, their artistic perception belies the theory they have read into them. The true meaning of Gluck's deference to the text will be evident a little later, so we may postpone the issue here.

The historical fact is that no matter what doctrines about the relationship between words and music have held sway, composers have made as free as they liked with their texts. Bach sometimes followed the verbal pattern faithfully in recitative fashion, sometimes built his music on the already composed poetic line, as in the chorales, and sometimes tore the sentences asunder, repeating phrases or separate words, and weaving these fragments of language into the most intricate vocal *fugati*, for instance in the motets. Yet no one could have more understanding or respect for words than Bach had for the sacred texts. What all good composers do with language is neither to ignore its character, nor to obey poetic laws, but to transform the entire verbal material—sound, meaning, and all—into musical elements.

When words enter into music they are no longer prose or poetry, they are elements of the music. Their office is to help create and develop the primary illusion of music, virtual time, and not that of literature, which is something else; so they give up their

literary status and take on purely musical functions. But that does not mean that now they have only sound-value. Here the theory of David Prall, that the 'aesthetic surface' of music is pure sound in orders of pitch, loudness, and *timbre*, and that in hearing music we perceive designs in the compass of this 'aesthetic surface', requires a little emendation if it is not to lose its significance in the face of some of the greatest musical endeavours—song, cantata, oratorio and opera. *For what we perceive is not the aesthetic surface.* What we hear is motion, tension, growth, living form—the illusion of a many-dimensional time in passage. The 'aesthetic surface' is something that underlies this illusion. If we assume an 'aesthetic attitude' and try to perceive only the abstracted tonal elements, we really discount the 'orcible semblance in order to understand its sensory vehicle. Such an interest commits us to the principle of treating words as pure phonemes, and leads into artificialities that increase in proportion to the freedom and power of vocal and dramatic music; for in the composer's imagination words simply do not figure as vowels held apart by consonants, despite the fact that intonation stresses their phonetic attributes, and gives these, too, possible independent functions in the audible structure.

The work is, as Prall says, composed of sounds; but everything that gives the sounds a different appearance of motion, conflict, repose, emphasis, etc., is a musical element. Anything that binds figures together, contrasts or softens them, in short: *affects the illusion*, is a musical element.

Words may enter directly into musical structure even without being literally understood; the *semblance of speech* may be enough. The most striking illustration of this principle is found in plainsong. In such mediæval chant the tonal material is reduced to the barest minimum: a single melodic line, small in compass, without polyphonic support, without accompaniment, without regular recurrent accent or 'beat'. Play such a line on the piano or on any melody instrument, it sounds poor and trivial, and seems to have no particular motion. But as soon as the words are articulated it moves, its wandering rhythmic figures cease to wander as they incorporate intoned speech rhythms, and the great Latin words fill the melodic form exactly as chords and counterpoints would fill it. The fact that the syllables supporting the tones are concatenated by their non-musical, original character into words and sentences, causes the tones to follow each other in a more organic sequence than the mere succession which they exhibit in an instrumental paraphrase. It is not the sentiment expressed in the words that makes them all-important to Gregorian chant; it is the cohesion of the Latin line, the simplicity of statement, the greatness of certain words, which causes the composer to dwell on these and subordinate what is contextual to them. Even a person who has no inkling of Greek—perhaps does not recognize the incursion of Greek words into the Latin mass—feels the sacred import of the text:

*Kyrie Eleison,
Christe Eleison,*

because the exploitation of those four words is a full musical event.¹

¹ This function of the text persists in later music. Donald Tovey says of the opening chorus of Bach's *Magnificat*: 'It is a concerto in which the chorus-voices play the part of the solo-instrument.' (*Essays in Musical Analysis*, V, 52.)

Furthermore, the paucity of musical means requires the vividness and warmth that belong to the human voice. But where words and voice are pitted against such very slight formal elements as homophonic melody without bar lines, without any tonic-and-dominant anchorage, without the mechanically fixed pitch that strings or pipes assure, there is an obvious danger of losing the artistic illusion altogether under the impact of personal utterance. Here the work demands something to assure its impersonality and objectivity; and in fact, it keeps these virtues mainly by the formalities of its performance. Choric song is a strong antidote to sentimentalism, because the expressions of actual feeling that threaten the musical illusion cancel each other out in group singing. A chorus, therefore, is always an impersonal influence. Where this safeguard does not operate—that is, where a single cantor intones the service—it is the spirit of his vicariate, his own depersonalized status, that preserves the artistic integrity of the chant, which is conceived as something objective and efficacious and not as an opportunity for self-expression. The self with all its actual desires is in abeyance as the priest celebrates his office.

The point of this whole discussion of plainsong is to show by a classic example how music may absorb and utilize phenomena that do not belong to its normal material, the 'aesthetic surface' of tones in their several relational orders, at all. But whatever importations it admits to its precincts it transforms, lock, stock, and barrel, into *musical elements*. What helps and what hinders musical expression depends on what the primary illusion can completely swallow up. The sense of words, the fervour of utterance, devotional duties, choric responses—these are all foreign materials, but in so far as they affect the image of time, either by assuring its dissociation from actual experience, or stressing its vital import, or furnishing genuine structural factors, they are virtual elements in a realm of purely musical imagination. Anything that can enter into the vital symbolism of music belongs to music, and whatever cannot do this has no traffic with music at all.

When words and music come together in song, music swallows words; not only mere words and literal sentences, but even literary word-structures, poetry. Song is not a compromise between poetry and music, though the text taken by itself be a great poem; song is music. It need not even have, in the strict European sense, melody; a monotone chant punctuated with changing chords,² an African drummed piece on which the long, wailing declamation breaks in, rising and falling within a stationless tonal continuum, is song, not speech. The principles of music govern its form no matter what materials it uses, from rattling gourds to holy names.

When a composer puts a poem to music, he annihilates the poem and makes a song. That is why trivial or sentimental lyrics may be good texts as well as great poems. The words must convey a *composable* idea, suggest centres of feeling and lines of connexion, to excite a musician's imagination. Some composers, for instance Beethoven, are thus excited by great literature, others find a musical core in quite insignificant verses as often as in real poetry. Schubert composed the undeniably second-rate poems of Müller into a song cycle just as beautiful and important as his settings of Heine's and Shakespeare's poetic treasures. Müller's works are much

² An example of this is given—in European music, at that—by Carl Orff's *Antigone*.

poorer literature, but just as good texts; and in the musical works to which they have given rise their inferiority is redeemed, because as poetry they have disappeared.

Eminent aestheticians have repeatedly declared that the highest form of song composition is a fusion of perfect poetry with perfect music.³ But actually a very powerful poem is apt to militate against all music. Robert Schumann made this discovery when he turned from his original literary and critical interests to musical composition. In his youth he wrote an essay *On the Intimate Relationship between Poetry and Music*, in which he said, after a long, romantic passage in praise of each separate art: 'Still greater is the effect of their union: greater and fairer, when the simple tone is enhanced by the winged syllable, or the hovering word is lifted on the melodious billows of sound, when the light rhythm of verse is gently combined with the orderly measure of the bars in gracious alternation. . . .'⁴ This is typical literary music criticism, that treats music as a soft romantic accompaniment duplicating the sound-effects of poetry. But as a mature musician he wrote in a different vein. He had produced many songs and knew that the composition of a text was no gentle compromise, no gracious alternation of poetic and musical values. In reviewing Joseph Klein's renderings of the lyrics from Goethe's *Wilhelm Meister*, he said: 'To speak frankly, it seems to me that the composer has too much respect for his poem, as though he were afraid to hurt it by seizing it too ardently; so at every turn we find rests, hesitations, embarrassments. But the poem should lie like a bride in the minstrel's arm, free, happy, and entire; then it sounds like something from heaven afar.' And further, with special reference to Mignon's song *Kennst du das Land*: 'Indeed I know no musical setting of this song, except Beethoven's, that can approach the impression it makes all by itself, without music.'⁵

Here is the key to a radical difficulty in song writing. A poem that has perfect form, in which everything is said and nothing merely adumbrated, a work completely developed and closed, does not readily lend itself to composition. It will not give up its literary form. This is true of most of Goethe's poems. The poetic creations are so entirely autonomous and self-contained that many abler composers than Klein have shrunk from violating them to transform them into a mere plastic substance for another work, and use them anew as musical elements without independent form. A second-rate poem may serve this purpose better because it is easier for the music to assimilate its words and images and rhythms. On the other hand, some very fine lyrics make excellent texts, for instance Shakespeare's incidental songs, the robust, simple verses of Burns, most of Verlaine's poetry, and notably Heine's. The reason is that all these poets imply as much as they speak; the form is frail, no matter how artful (as it certainly is with Verlaine and Heine), the ideas it conveys are not fully exploited, the feelings not dramatically built up as they are in Goethe's poems. All their potentialities are still there and are emphasized by the ironically casual form. Consequently the poetic work can dissolve again at the touch of an alien imaginative

³ The most famous is, of course, Wagner, who dreamed of a work that should unite *all* arts on an equal footing, a *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

⁴ *Gesammelte Schriften über Musik u. Musiker*, Vol. II p.173.

⁵ *Ibid.* Vol. I, p. 272.

force, and the beautiful, overcharged words—‘My love is like a red, red rose’—or: ‘Les sanglots longues des violons’—can motivate entirely new expressive forms, musical instead of poetic.

This, above all, is what the text must do in all music that is based on words. There is a musical form anciently known as the ‘air’, which begins with a text, but takes from it chiefly the pattern of metric accents to frame a simple, self-contained melody, which may be played without words or sung to any verses that follow its metre. The folk song and the hymn tune are examples of such abstractable vocal music. The air is characteristically neither sad nor happy; but the way it can take such specific colouring from the various words on which it may be carried shows how closely sadness and happiness, exaltation and rage, contentment and melancholy really resemble each other in essence. The same tune may be a drinking song or a national anthem, a ballad or a ditty.⁶ But even where words may be freely varied, they are assimilated by the tune as elements that make the music lighter or deeper, drive it forward or hold it back, soften it or slow it. A folk song played without words may be lovely, but it always sounds a little bit simple-minded. It is, in fact, empty, incomplete. Consider the difference between hearing four stanzas of such a song, e.g. *Marleborough s’en va-t-en guerre*, in a foreign language, i.e. without being able to understand the words, and hearing the tune played four times in succession on an instrument! The articulation of the words, the element of utterance they contribute, is part of the music, without any literary appeal. Donald Tovey, though I think he never really distinguished the musically important function of the text from its one-time literary functions, none the less recognized its active responsibilities in song, when he wrote: ‘I have not yet had an opportunity of producing any vocal music without words, such as Medtner’s *Vocal Sonata* or Debussy’s *Sirènes*, and so I have not gone into the interesting questions that arise when the human voice thrusts all instruments aside, as it inevitably does, only to disappoint the expectation of human speech’.⁷

In so-called ‘art song’, there may be a conscious irony achieved when the same words are put to different musical phrases, e.g. in Schubert’s *Die liebe Farbe*, where the words ‘Mein Schatz hat’s Grün so gern’ (‘My love’s so fond of green’) appear in a bright, high phrase, to be immediately repeated in a low and level one that follows like a sombre undertone. Here the text is the unchanging factor that throws the contrast of the two musically given moods into relief, and unites them in one reference. But, whatever the particular function of the words, they normally enter into the very matrix of the song.⁸

⁶ *The Star-Spangled Banner* appears first as an English drinking song. Thomas Moore’s *Believe me if all those endearing young charms* was written to an Irish air, which was already serving, at the time, as *Fair Harvard*.

⁷ *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 1.

⁸ There is a letter from Beethoven to his publishers, Breitkopf & Härtel in Leipzig, which bears testimony to this fact: ‘In spite of my note in favour of the old text, you have retained the unfortunate correction of the chorus “We have seen him” in the Oratorio. Good heavens, do they, then, believe in Saxony that the word makes the music? If an unsuitable word can spoil the music, and it certainly can, one should be glad to find that music and words are one and the same thing and, although in themselves the expressions used are vulgar, refrain from trying to improve anything. . . .’ (Beethoven, *Briefe und Gespräche*, p. 82.)

The fundamental principle of art which makes the transformation of a poetic line into musical thought possible is briefly but clearly stated in a little article by Mario Castelnuovo-Tedesco, wherein he says: 'The poem must have an "expressive core"; it should express a "state of soul." . . . It should express the "core" in a perfect, simple and clear and harmonious form, but without too many words. A certain "margin" should be left for the music; from this point of view, an intimate and restrained poem is preferable to a too sonorous and decorative one.

' . . . When I find a poem that particularly interests me and arouses my emotion, I commit it to memory. . . . After some time . . . I sing it quite naturally; the music is born. . . . So much for the vocal part. But in a song there is also the instrumental part. . . . To produce it properly is a matter of finding the right atmosphere, the "background," the environment that surrounds and develops the vocal line. . . . This something exists in the poetry too. I have already said that every poem-for-music must have, above all, an "expressive core"—which may be formed of one or several fundamental elements—a core that provides the key to the poem itself. It is this key, it is these elements, that one must discover and to which one must give utterance through almost "symbolic" musical means.'⁹

The principle of assimilation, whereby one art 'swallows' the products of another, not only establishes the relation of music to poetry, but resolves the entire controversy about pure and impure music, the virtues and vices of programme music, the condemnation of opera as 'hybrid', versus the ideal of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*.

There is no such thing as an 'inferior' or 'impure' *kind* of music. There is only good or bad music. Of course there are different kinds—vocal and instrumental, lyric and dramatic, secular and religious, naïve and cultivated—but no kind is 'higher' or 'purer' than any other. I cannot agree at all with W. J. Henderson (whose book, *What is Good Music?* seems to me a sort of musical etiquette book setting up a social standard of good taste) when he says categorically: 'Music unaccompanied by text is called absolute music, and this is surely the highest form of the art.'¹⁰ Neither can I subscribe to the opinion of Paul Bertrand, that there are two opposed aims in music-making, the one to create form, the other to express feeling, and that the first is the ideal of 'pure', the second of 'dramatic' music.

'It is universally recognized', says M. Bertrand, 'that music, pre-eminently the language of feeling, may be expressed in two very different ways that are essentially distinct.

'Pure music aims above all else at the aesthetic grouping of sounds; having no direct recourse to poetry it expresses feeling only in a way that is vague and general, undetermined by precision of language. Here music holds sovereign sway. Having to suffice unto itself, it is compelled to maintain, of itself alone, a balance of form

⁹ *Music and Poetry: Problems of a Song Writer*, *Musical Quarterly*, XXX, no. 1 (January, 1944), 102-111. The phrase, 'almost "symbolic" musical means', indicates that he knows the utterance is symbolic, but no definition of 'symbol' fits the character of a musical work, so he treats his expression as metaphorical.

¹⁰ W. J. Henderson, *What is Good Music?*, p. 87.

calculated to satisfy the intellect at all times and consequently to sacrifice part of its intensity of expression.

'Dramatic music, on the other hand, subordinates music to words, gestures, actions, largely absolving it of all concern as regards balance of form, seeing that poetry, the language of intellect, intervenes in direct fashion, and music simply strengthens it by contributing all the power of expression it can supply.

'These two terms therefore, pure music and dramatic music, do not represent an arbitrary classification of musical productions, but two different—and to some extent opposite—conceptions of the rôle of music. . . . One of these two conceptions has always grown and developed at the expense of the other.'¹¹

This passage not only illustrates the popular confusion between musical expression, which is formulation of feeling, and self-expression, the catharsis of more or less inarticulate feeling, but also reveals the inconsistency that vitiates a theory of music based on that confusion. For if music be '*pre-eminently* the language of feeling', as M. Bertrand says, then why is not pure music purely such a language? Why should the pre-eminent instrument, used alone, be able to express feeling 'only in a way that is vague and general'? And if its true function be to act as a sensuous stimulus enhancing the emotionality of drama or poetry, then why should it ever be composed into a mere 'aesthetic grouping of sounds' to satisfy the intellect?

A theory that makes music appear as an art divided against itself, doing by turns two essentially incommensurable, if not incompatible, things, certainly does not go deep into its problems. The truth is, I think, that the range of musical forms is enormous, as the diversity of vital experiences is enormous, taking in flamboyant passions that can be presented only on a grand scale, and also the profound unspectacular emotive life that demands subtle, intricate, self-contained symbols, intensive and anything but vague, for its articulation. When music is strong and free it can 'swallow' and assimilate not only words, but even drama. Dramatic actions, like the 'poetic core', become motivating centres of feeling, musical ideas. Mendelssohn, composing Goethe's *Walpurgisnacht*, wrote to the author: 'When the Druid makes his sacrifice, and the whole thing becomes so solemn and immeasurably great, one really doesn't need to make up any music for it, the music is so apparent in it already, it is all full of the sound, and I have sung the verses to myself without thinking (about composing them). . . . I only hope that one will be able to hear in my music how deeply the beauty of the words has moved me.'¹²

The simple belief that all arts do the same thing in the same way, only with different sensuous materials, has led most people to a serious misconception concerning the relationship of music to poetry and drama. The text, written in advance, certainly has literary form. If the procedures of the several arts were really analogous, a composer could only translate that form into its musical equivalent. Then it would make sense to say, as Henderson does, that operatic music 'is governed absolutely

¹¹ *Pure Music and Dramatic Music*, *Musical Quarterly*, IX (1923), 545. (Originally published in French in *Le Ménestrel*, June, 1921, and translated by Fred Rothwell.)

¹² Felix Mendelssohn-Bartholdy, *Meisterbriefe*, edited by Ernst Wolff, pp. 37-38.

by the text'.¹³ But a shadow-like following of verse forms and literary concepts does not produce a musical organism. Music must grow from its own 'commanding form'. Let Mendelssohn speak once more: 'I can conceive music (for a poem) only if I can conceive a mood that produces it; mere artfully arranged sounds that aptly follow the accent of the words, *forte* on strong words and *piano* on mild ones, but without really expressing anything, I have never been able to understand. Yet for this poem I can't imagine any other kind of music than this—not intensive, integral, poetic, but accompanying, parallel, musical music; but I don't like that sort.'

The expression 'musical music' is puzzling at first glance; it becomes clear enough, however, by comparison with the previous term 'poetic'. The feeling of the poem must enter into the matrix itself. Music in which the very gist of a poem has been incorporated is, I think, what Mendelssohn meant by 'poetic' music; specifically, music which does *not* parallel the literary structure. A song conceived 'poetically' sounds not as the poem sounds, but as the poem *feels*; in the process of composition, individual words, images, and actions merely present opportunities for the development of the composer's ideas. Details of story or imagery that do not give such openings simply disappear in the new creation; they may be present, but they are not discerned. What he called 'musical music', on the other hand, is something independent of the poem, externally similar in structure, but manufactured out of entirely independent material to 'match' the verses, which remain essentially unchanged by it.

The measure of a good text, a good libretto, even a good subject for music, is simply its transformability into music; and that depends on the composer's imagination. Thus Mozart, working on *Die Entführung*, wrote to his father, who had found all kinds of faults with the libretto: 'As for Stephanie's work, you are quite right, of course. . . . I know well enough that his versification is not of the best; but it falls in so well with my musical ideas (which are disporting themselves in my head all in advance), that I can't help liking it, and I am ready to bet that in the performance of the work you won't notice any shortcomings.'¹⁴

Because the text must be, first of all, an ingredient in the commanding form, the musical conception as a whole, a conscious collaboration between poet and composer is not really as valuable as people are prone to believe. Not that it is worthless; Mozart certainly availed himself of Stephanie's services in the course of his work,¹⁵ and Beethoven, a much less facile worker than Mozart, wrote an oratorio in a fortnight with the ready aid of his librettist; yet he felt that the union of those entirely subservient words with his music was a *mariage de convenance*. 'For my part', he wrote at that time, 'I had rather compose even Homer, Klopstock, Schiller. Though they present great difficulties to be overcome, those immortal poets at least are worthy of one's effort.'¹⁶

¹³ *Op. cit.*, p. 86.

¹⁴ Albert Leitzmann, ed., *Mozarts Briefe*. Letter dated Vienna, October 15, 1781.

¹⁵ In another letter, again to his father, he wrote: 'At the beginning of the third act is a charming quintet or rather finale, but I would rather have this at the close of the second act. In order to manage this, a great change has to be wrought, an entirely new departure, and Stephanie is up to his ears in work.' *Ibid.*, letter dated Vienna, September 26, 1781.

¹⁶ *Op. cit.*, letter to the *Wiener Gesellschaft der Musikfreunde*, dated January 25, 1824.

In view of the practice and comments of these great composers, Wagner's criticism, that the great fault of opera had always been the subordination of the dramatic elements to the whims, inclinations and tastes of the composer, whereas the drama should really predominate and the music be mere emotional expression accompanying it,¹⁷ sounds oddly pointless and unjustified. Odder yet is the practical effect of his resolution to make music a mere means to enhance the action and lend it emotional intensity. Mozart cut his scores ruthlessly wherever he felt that arias or ensembles impeded the action, or, as he said, 'made the scene grow pale and cold, and very embarrassing for the other actors, who had to stand around'; but in Wagner's operas, however exciting the music, the action drags interminably, and the actors stand around most of the time. Above all, no opera is more unmistakably music and not drama. One may hear Wagner's overtures, or *Liebestod*, or *Feuerzauber*, in many a symphony concert; but has any theatre company ever offered even his best libretto, the *Meistersinger*, as a play without music? Would anyone think of enacting *Tristan* as spoken tragedy? What holds for his playwrighting holds also for his other non-musical efforts. The spectacle may be ever so grand, the staging ever so ambitious (as in his day the revolving stage for *Parsifal* certainly was), Wagner's theatrical inspiration is not expert stagecraft; the libretto is never great poetry; the scenery he demanded is no more great painting than any other, for scenery is not pictorial art at all; in short, his music drama is not the *Gesamtkunstwerk*, the work-of-all-arts, which he had projected in theory, but a work of music, like all the 'reprehensible' operas that went before it.

This brings us back to the first great composer of opera who had proposed to subordinate his music to the dramatic action: Gluck. He, too, produced works essentially musical, though unlike Wagner he took finished plays for his librettos. But the play as such disappears in the great, single, and truly dramatic movement of the music. Not only the emotions of the *personae dramatis*, but the very sense of the action, the scope of the subject, *the feeling of the play as a whole*, are elements in the first musical conception. The music is 'subordinated' only in the sense of being *motivated* by the text.

There is a discerning little article by an author who calls himself 'an amateur, who has long pursued musical interests via his instrument, and sometimes in the realm of theory', on the subject of Gluck's dramatic art. Emil Staiger, this modest amateur, conceives the significance of Gluck's project and its musical result in a way that makes his essay a direct testimony to the principle of 'assimilation' here discussed.¹⁸

'Wagner employs music to elucidate the text psychologically and philosophically', says Staiger. 'With this intent he develops his *Leitmotiv* device, which permits him to follow every turn of the poetic phrase, to allude to mythical or psychical circumstances and mention things whereof his heroes are perhaps still unaware, or on which

¹⁷ Cf. Richard Wagner, *Gesammelte Schriften und Dichtungen*, Vol. III, *Oper u. Drama*, p. 231: 'If, then, I declare that the error in the art-form of opera lay in the fact that a means of expression (music) was treated as an end, and the purpose of the expression (drama) as a means, I do so . . . to combat the miserable half-measures that infest our art and criticism.'

¹⁸ See Gluck's *Bühnentechnik*, in his *Musik und Dichtung*.

they keep discreet silence. But the more Wagner's music traffics with such details of the text, the more is he in danger of losing the larger line. Indeed, the *Ring* cycle, and even separate parts or acts of it, cannot really be apprehended as a unit except by intellectual reflexion on the ideational structure. The great single span is missing in this musical epic. From the depths of the soul his tones and figures arise, endowed with tremendous magic—who could seriously deny that? But they fall back again without support, and only rarely does the work exhibit any great forms.

'Not so Gluck! He too was possessed with a human interest, as much as Wagner. . . . (But) his music seeks to represent his characters not by a *Leitmotiv*—rather, one might say, through tonal relations—chiefly, however, by means of something that really eludes description, a peculiar tracing of musical lines, a sort of melodic profile, which remains unaltered through all external changes. Thus Orpheus, in all his singing, is (the embodiment of) great and noble sorrow, so controlled that even his most moving lament occurs in a major key; and Eurydice is pure chastity, as transparent almost as glass. And if, in comparison with Wagner's intricate psychology, this might be called primitive, we can only say that in just this matter Gluck was guided by a truer dramatic insight, which was lost to Wagner's epoch as it is to ours, but which demands the subordination of psychological interest. . . .

'Hölderlin draws the comparison, somewhere, between the progress of an ancient tragedy and the progress of a poetic verse. A verse has a beginning, and sooner or later reaches a point of highest intonation. Then it sinks back again and dies away. The Attic drama runs a similar course. . . . The poet begins with an agonized situation that cries for its resolution. He intensifies the unbearable. He introduces scenes of relative calm and starts a further increase of feeling, till a crisis occurs and the tension is swiftly or gradually resolved. The spectator is delighted far more than he himself knows by the rhythmic sequence of scenes, the wise meting-out of emotions, the great arc of passion that spans the piece from beginning to end.'

This 'great arc of passion', rising from a troubled beginning to sublime heights, and subsiding at last to a serene, final cadence, Staiger finds in the very structure, the 'commanding form', of Gluck's operas. Gluck himself was so aware of its source in the Greek story, that he credited Calzabigi with the lion's share of his own works. But the librettos are, after all, far from Greek tragedy in literary and dramatic power and form. The 'happy ending' of *Orpheus* violates the myth so that as a play it would be unbearable. Gluck, however, felt the spirit of the myth even in the softened form. Just because he read it from the first as that which his music was to make of it, to him it had form and beauty. In reality, however, Staiger says quite truly: 'To the composer it was given to distribute the stresses, here to restrain the burst of passion, there to strike with full force, and then, muting his tone, to descend from the terrible height back to the level again. It was the composer who created the new operatic art.'

And finally he states the secret of Gluck's relation to the unfolding plot:

' . . . He wished, as he said in the introduction to *Alceste*, that the music should enhance the interest of the dramatic situation without interrupting the action. Now we know what this means. It is not a matter of satisfying the curiosity of the audience

without interpolating musical obstacles; the point is, not to lose the single span of feeling, the vast rhythmic unity of the whole. . . .

'If we review (Gluck's work) from this standpoint, his much-debated dictum, that music should subserve the text, suddenly appears in a new light. Although Gluck was determined to let his music play handmaiden to the poetic work, he was not obliged for one moment to betray his music, because from the very first moment he conceived drama itself, the tragic art of the ancient Greeks, in the spirit of music, i.e. as an art that uses passions and mutually attuned characters and events *to create music*.'¹⁹

Now this is simply the principle of assimilation, whereby the words of a poem, the biblical allusions in a cantata, the characters and events in comedy or tragedy become musical elements when they are musically used. If the composition is music at all, it is pure music, and not a hybrid of two or more arts. The *Gesamtkunstwerk* is an impossibility, because a work can exist in only one primary illusion, which every element must serve to create, support, and develop. That is what happened to Wagner's operas in spite of himself: they are music, and what is left of his non-musical importations that did not undergo a complete change into music, is dross.

There remains one major question, perhaps to many minds the most important: the purity or impurity, merit or demerit, of 'programme music'. So much has been written for and against it that we shall do best, perhaps, to cut across the familiar arguments, and apply the same measure to the concept of the 'programme' as to all previous problematical concepts. That measure lies in the fundamental question: 'How does the "programme" affect the making, the perception, or the comprehension of the musical piece as an expressive form?' The answer to this query reveals, I think, the uses and misuses of the *petit roman* in their proper contrast.

Ever since music became an independent art, separate from intoned speech and danced rhythms (and perhaps even before), there has been melody obviously suggested by natural sounds or movements, that might be called, in a general way, 'programme music'. The imitation of the cuckoo's cry in *Sumer is i-cumen in* is usually quoted as the oldest instance we can recover. Then came the time of 'musical hermeneutic' when upward and downward movements of melodic phrases were interpreted as symbols of rising spirit and sinking spirit, respectively, i.e. of joy and sorrow, life and death. Then semiquavers trembled, chromatics mourned, arpeggios praised the Lord. In the age of Bach and Handel such interpretations had become conventional enough to furnish a large store of suggestions to the composer setting a text to music. And herein lay the value of this decorous 'tone painting': it suggested *musical devices* to be used in the most varied total forms and original contexts, much as the Bible offers its language for the most spontaneous and special prayers. The devices were recognized melodic figures and rhythmic patterns, and their general acceptance actually relieved the composer of any obligation to imitate natural intonations and gestures. And furthermore, while direct imitations are bound to the ideas they are supposed to convey, the traditional renderings are free musical elements; they may

¹⁹ *Op. cit.*, pp. 29-37.

be used for purely creative purposes in the making of expressive forms not motivated by any poetic text. Schweitzer's contention, that Bach used certain musical figures regularly in conjunction with emotionally tinged words like 'death', 'joy', 'suffering', 'heaven', and that those figures recurring in his purely instrumental music still carried the same poetic connotations, so that his fugues and suites should be viewed as 'poems' translated into music,²⁰ seems to me entirely unjustified. As Tovey said of the fabric of musical gestures, obviously inspired by the words in vocal music, 'Bach took it for granted, and did not attach to it anything like the importance it is apt to assume in the minds of readers who learn of its rediscovery today. Good music was to him a thing that could be used to any good new purpose, regardless of what its details may have symbolized in their first setting'.²¹

Actually, the same figures that in religious cantatas accompany mortal fear or self-abasement may be humorously used to connote sinuous worms in Haydn's *Creation*, and may occur in Mozart's minuets where certainly nobody is grovelling at all. The words of the cantatas may have suggested tonal renderings by their emotive values, but what it all comes to is that those words, with all their religious or human significance, have been assimilated by a purely musical form, the matrix of the cantata, from which the rhythmic and melodic figures that are their characteristic settings emerge with the same logic as the evolution of functional details in an organism.

Such composition is not 'programme music', but simply music. To a genuine tonal imagination everything that sounds harbours the possibility of tonal forms and may become a motif, and many silent things, too, offer their rhythms as musical ideas. Anything is good out of which one can make a theme, a passage, a movement: the cuckoo's call that provides a canon, the bells that ring the bass of Mussorgsky's Easter music, the heartbeat skilfully given to the violins (for much greater transformation than tympani could make) in Mozart's *Entführung*, or ideas of dramatic action and passion. All such ideas motivate the course of the music which develops by their suggestion. But it does not imitate as closely as possible, approximating natural noises and undramatized self-expression; for, as Mozart said, 'Music must always remain music'.

Music must remain music, and everything else that enters in must *become* music. That is, I think, the whole secret of 'purity', and the only rule that determines what is or is not relevant.

²⁰ Schweitzer, *J. S. Bach, Le musicien-poète*.

²¹ *Op. cit.*, Vol. V, p. 51.

BOULEZ AND STOCKHAUSEN

Robert Craft

Notes written in the course of preparing a recording of Le marteau sans maître and Zeitmasse for American Columbia.

Le marteau sans maître

INFLUENCES (considered as possible clues to orientation, not as points of departure). Though *Le marteau* is significant primarily for its own newness, the fact that it brings together two or three diverse strands seems to me almost as important. It is a connecting and tradition-forming work.

The principle is Webern's; it is a post-Webern development. The foundations of these young composers' serial systems as well as the general direction of their style were formed by Webern. Superficially, of course, neither composer resembles Webern, and both are enemies of those who write little *pointilliste* pieces à la Webern. Webern's originality is inimitable; Boulez and Stockhausen are not concerned with it but with its consequences.

An example of Webern's influence can be discovered by comparing the first movement of the *Symphony*, Op. 21, and the sixth movement of *Le marteau*. Boulez does not attempt to adapt Webern's already perfect and unadaptable form but he has been inspired by it nevertheless. The spatial dispositions are similar (but more complex in Boulez), and so are the instrumental styles with their doublings and overlappings. The actual imitative devices used in the two compositions differ, but the fact of them as a solution to the formal problem is categorically the same in both. Both pieces are melodic in substance and both stress some of the same melodic intervals, especially sixths and thirds. Boulez's dramatic structure is Webern-inspired too: the introduction, the kind of climax, the coda, even the last chord, which must be compared with the final B flat of the second violins in the Webern—as final-feeling a final chord as any in 'tonal' music.

More generally, Webern is the source of much of the Boulez-Stockhausen language. For one thing, though these younger composers' rhythmic patterns do not overtly resemble Webern's, they are nevertheless developed from Webern's Opp. 14-20. Webern is the origin, also, of much of their instrumental conception. And though the styles and energies of their music are very different in kind, Webern is again the example. I should note, too, that as Webern has both a simple and a complex style so do these composers exploit a stylistic duality; with them, as with Webern, it becomes a dialectic of the form.

Another major antecedent of *Le marteau* is *Pierrot Lunaire*. While none of Schoenberg's serial music has had any influence on Boulez—apart from the fact that Schoenberg's discovery of the serial principle in the first place is the main tradition that he seeks to establish—Boulez regards *Pierrot Lunaire* as one of the great source works of our century. But *Pierrot Lunaire* would be the model for any virtuoso-style instrumental chamber piece of this sort; it would be hard to avoid. The dramatic structure of *Le marteau*—its short pieces and their sequence—recalls the plan of *Pierrot*, no matter how different the two are in substance. One movement, the solo for flute and voice, is so near to *Pierrot*—even in its 'expressionism'—that the fluttersong seem almost like a cross reference. The fact that *Le marteau* survives comparison with *Pierrot* is already to my mind an indication of Boulez's great strength and personality.

Stravinsky is also a grandparent to one strain of *Le marteau*, which is what I meant above by the diversity of sources on which Boulez has drawn. Boulez is too French to have swallowed Vienna whole and Stravinsky is far too deeply allied with French tradition for any French composer of the present day to be able to escape at least *Le Sacre du Printemps*. (It is worth noting that Boulez has published a very careful analysis of *Le Sacre*.) Echoes of Stravinsky's rhythmic and percussive style in *Le marteau* are faint perhaps, but they are echoes nevertheless. In the middle section of the second movement, the metrical variation, simple syncopation and *timbre* are all Stravinskian. And the first part of the fourth movement is in effect Stravinskian, too; even though it contains the most elaborate use of hocketing I know of in all music and is in this respect a thousand times more complex than Stravinsky, the rhythmic effect is of a kind of syncopation of which Stravinsky is the forefather.

These are the major composer influences—Webern mostly, Schoenberg for *Pierrot Lunaire*, Stravinsky in one type of rhythm. Of some part of their music Boulez has made new and significant use. There are other influences and ingredients too, for example, Oriental and Latin-American percussion instruments (gongs, maracas, bongos), jazz, the music of Messiaen and Varèse.

Le marteau represents a consolidation and simplification in Boulez's own development, too. It is his first work to have attained a wide success. (Why? Because it is less purely 'abstract' than his piano pieces?¹ Because it has a dramatic form and an exotic instrumentation? Because it is comparatively simple to hear and to follow?)

One of the most difficult items in *Le marteau* is speed. Whether or not the world is moving more quickly than ever before, fast *tempi* today are faster than in any previous period. Boulez's characteristic fast *tempo* is 208 beats per minute whereas only a generation ago Webern's was 168. Webern did go faster than 200 (in the *Saxophone Quartet*) but this is exceptional, and besides, the beats in this instance can and should be doubled up. Beethoven begins the race by breaking through the conventional *tempi* designated by Italian words. He greatly extends the ranges

¹ In a lecture of January 15, 1932, Webern refers to the *Kunst der Fuge* as 'abstract' in tendency and goes on to suggest that the 'twelve-tone music we are writing' is also abstract in tendency. However tenuous the distinction, Webern's sense is clear: he means what musicologists mean when they refer to the more 'learned', 'puzzle-solving' Masses of Josquin des Prés as the more 'abstract'.

and varies the kinds of *tempi* and, at the same time, adds new speed. But Beethoven's *allegro molto* is 152 (the *Eroica*) and 152 is only *molto moderato* for Boulez. In *Le marteau*, speed as a whole, not only the speed of fast movements, is much greater than in any music of any earlier period. In part this helps to explain why *Le marteau* is largely treble in sound, why everything moves at such high pitch. It accounts for the choice of the guitar too, as the lightest and most nimble instrument in the bass register. Perhaps if the tendency continues we will be able in the future to learn to hear the motor of the humming-bird.

STRUCTURE. Cyclic thematic ideas employed as unifying devices (in the vocal part, where they are more obvious to the listener; the voice itself must be considered as a device of form in relating the third, fifth, sixth, and ninth movements).

1. The music of *Je rêve la tête* is identical in the third and ninth movements, albeit backwards and with the guitar in No. 9 (bar 35) playing the first part of the vocal phrase in No. 3. The effect of this as a *reprise* is immediate.
2. *J'écoute marcher*, the first words of the ninth movement, and *Le marcheur* in the sixth movement are sung to the same major seventh interval, accompanied by the same triplet in percussion and viola, and followed by the same three-note percussion solo. This connexion is also very striking and, in music that is virtually without repetition, connexions like these stand out miles.
3. Other melodic ideas² in the vocal part re-occur in the last movement like refrains; for example, the augmented fourth interval in bar 23 of No. 3 and the melody in the ninth movement after the recitative (bar 42) beginning with that interval.

As contact deepens the listener will continue to discover melodic threads—the music is all melodic, basically—and though he may not be able to relate them exactly he will still feel them as relationships. In fact, many of them, for example the flash-back devices in the ninth movement, are quite simple to grasp. These relationships are a serial matter, of course, and the unity they achieve is one of the tenets of Boulez's serial organization. However, it is my belief that the listener should not have any awareness of the serial material and should not attempt to approach the piece from that side.

Movements two, four, six, and eight are the 'little concerts'. They are sonata-type structures in that they use an ABA plan (two), and an AB (four). Six and eight are more complex but still use elements of sonata building (especially six). The first, third, and seventh movements are the preludes and interludes; the relationship of one and seven is emphasized expressly by the four *fermatas* at the large punctuations in the forms of each. Five and nine are the fantasies, the rhythmically unstable pieces. The form of nine is perhaps the most interesting of all, with its dramatic introduction suggesting earlier movements, its moments of sudden Grand Guignol atmosphere breaking on the 'refrains', its thrice-anticipated coda of flute and gongs, and its final and spectacular silences.

² They are not intervals, merely, because Boulez alters melodic intervals without destroying the melodic shape of the whole.

The difference between the serial technique practised by Schoenberg thirty years ago in his *Variations for Orchestra* and the serial technique of the pieces on this record is so great that I can find no example in musical history of a comparable intensification. Schoenberg's system combined the transpositions and orders of a basic *horizontal* series horizontally and, in groups or segments of itself, vertically (though the aural justification for this latter step has always escaped me). The result is a music of degrees: instead of tonal movement, degree transposition. It is at bottom a system of substitution.

Boulez, on the other hand, begins with vertical serial units (which are not, as Schoenberg's are, merely telescoped horizontal series). He can vary them by transposing them on themselves and to the same number of degrees (changing the density, that is) as the horizontal series. Also, Schoenberg's serial conception worked for the control of pitch only, and Boulez and Stockhausen use rhythmic series, dynamic series, a serial distribution of *timbres*, serial densities. These other controls guarantee the subjection of the material to constant variation.

'But doesn't this mean in turn that it both moves and is static—a kaleidoscope? Aren't 'the serialization of everything' and 'total variation' and 'constant change' bound at some point to be the same as minimum or no change? If all is change doesn't change itself disappear?'

Listen to the *Zeitmasse* and see if change is not in fact as great as it is in any other music. Nevertheless, you are right in supposing that a certain static element is a consequence of serialism. Webern was aware of this; therefore his vertical construction is no more than a kind of prism of the horizontal and is careful not to add any new time factor by introducing depth of its own.³ But whether or not this is Boulez's concept also, Boulez is very much a composer in harmonic depth, who alternates chordal music with a music of lines, which you are meant to hear one line at a time or however many you can manage.

All discussion of Boulez and Stockhausen that I have seen has been concerned with their ideas and techniques, with what they are trying to do and how they do it. I know of no account that begins *ex post facto* with the music. But ears are notoriously unreliable; it is safer to argue the composers' number systems which, on paper, can be made to look unmusical indeed. (Some 'abstract' painters' sketches I have seen look just as disconcerting by themselves—lists of colours, not painted but written down like shopping lists.) However, the fact that these young composers should use numbers charts shocks even the less naïve, although it has been known for at least thirty years that Schoenberg composed with a chart of orders and transpositions in front of him, and, more recently, that Stravinsky's sketches are covered with serial orders—both of these men 'inspired' composers. But one still hears the question 'how can an inspired composer follow a "pre-formed" series of numbers?' The

³ Webern concludes one of his lectures in *Der Weg zu Komposition in zwölf Tönen* with an acrostic which I find characteristic of his mind in this regard. It is a puzzle, i.e. an 'abstract' problem, and is at the same time 'expressive' (of itself); it is irreducible—a perfect canon; it doesn't move, and each of its ways is another way of looking at the same thing.

answer is that choice continues to exist but has changed its area. Its possibilities are still sidereal, especially when one thinks of the permutation systems used by Stockhausen and Boulez. And, after all, the original relationships which create these possibilities are chosen. The composer is as much a 'composer' as ever; with the same 'numbers' that Boulez used to write *Le marteau* someone else will compose someone else's music.

Unless theory is based on some fact of natural law it is not so much theory in the 'natural philosophy' sense as speculation in the abstract sense. We are at the point where theories of nature as justifications have ceased to exist, or at any rate do not explain what happens. The composer is therefore obliged to invent rules just to have rules and because he must work according to something. In practice this is apt to lead to a new system for each work.

PITCH considered as a pure element loses some of its independent value in the new music. The successions of notes are as strong a characteristic of the composition as the pitch factor of the individual note—and not even the successions of *notes* but the successions of *intervals*: the four serial orders are interval transpositions more than note transpositions because one does not hear or remember the transposed *relationships* of the notes, while the transposed interval relationships are in many instances easily remembered. Other serial conditions, the dynamic, the frequency, the articulation, the *timbre* tend by association to reduce the supremacy of pitch over these other elements. For example, we hear a high, loud, *staccato* note in the oboe; that it is high, loud, *staccato*, and played by an oboe are factors of almost as great importance as whether the note itself is, say, F or G. This depends on the structure of the music at that moment, especially on the density, but that it could be the case at all proves the point.

Much terminology is obsolete and inadequate to describe the situation of contemporary music. In addition to this, the vocabulary has been overtaken by such mathematical terms as 'parameter' and 'vector'—used by the more conservative twelve-tone composers—and by the musico-electronic terms of the younger composers. A 'Fowler' of New Musical Usage is badly needed. For example:

'consonance' and 'dissonance'	are useful as aesthetic terms, perhaps; they no longer mean or define anything in music.
'harmony'	needs not only these quotation marks but quotation marks raised to two or three powers in the manner of I. A. Richards. In place of it we have definitions such as 'A density of notes in the vertical aggregation'.
'counterpoint'	Though still used among the young composers, I gather that they mean by it a style of 'Webern-like points'.
'tonal' and 'atonal'	are as meaningless as 'consonance' and 'dissonance'. All 'atonal' music is full of 'tonality' (even <i>Le marteau</i> , in the third movement, for instance; but for a curious example of the contrary, of a repeated and emphasized note exercising no tendency of 'tonal' attraction see the eighth movement, the

C sharp in bars 47-54). Schoenberg ridiculed 'atonal', as meaning 'without tone'.

'12-tone' Yes, of course, but all Western European music of the past five hundred years uses twelve tones.

'12-tone serial' This can now be used only to describe the music of Schoenberg and his school in the 1920s or 1930s—or Hauer. It is already a historically confined term and applies only in a very limited sense to the music of *Le marteau* or *Zeitmasse*.

'technique',
'system', 'form',
'method' These are all somewhere interchangeable. For example, 'canon' and 'variation' are at the same time 'forms' and 'techniques' in new music (they are in fact the forms *par excellence* of the new music).

RHYTHM. Stravinsky's rhythmic revolution of 1913 appeared at the time like an anarchy of accents. It did revolutionize accent and metre, of course, but just as significant is the use in it of combined multiple rhythms. *Le Sacre du Printemps* is still the source of every rhythmically inventive composer down to Stockhausen and Boulez. In 1913 Webern was also revolutionizing the rhythmic language, but by means of triplets which he used simply and in combined forms as rhythmic units of equal importance with twos and fours. This created the possibility of a new rhythmic polyphony by developing the subdivisions of the beat and by reducing the incidences of twos and fours. It also suggested rhythmic rotation which led to serialism. Webern later abandoned this rhythmic direction, however, and became mostly concerned with problems of beat attenuation, accent, and bar.

Boulez and Stockhausen exceed Webern and serially equate units of 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 with the usual 2s, 3s, and 4s, and even this new range is extended by the device of indicating a group of notes to be played 'in the time of' some other unit, for example, 'six notes in the time of five'. (The execution of these new rhythmic patterns presents several difficulties at first; the performer who has never had to think and feel fives and sevens now finds he has to feel both at the same time.)

Boulez and Stockhausen have exceeded Webern in another important respect, too. Webern did not tamper with the functions of beat and bar. In some of his most complex music both may be momentarily obscured by the absence of co-ordinating rhythms on certain strong beats, but both are always there. In some of his later music, too, the beat is attenuated to an extreme degree by the use of many successive silent beats. This produces an unbearable tension but it does not kill the beat. (The performance of such music must be perfect, of course, but in this music there is only perfection or chaos; I am thinking of the last six songs with piano and of the *Piano Variations*, op. 27.)

Beat is not always so apparent in Boulez and Stockhausen. In *Le marteau*, the fifth movement especially, constant and rapid changes of *tempo* by means of systematic *tempo* controls (Boulez uses the sign $\nearrow \searrow$ to mean a flexible *tempo* up or down to the metronomic limits and mediums he sets) do tend to obscure it. Nevertheless, I would say that in *Le marteau* we can always 'feel the beat' in the old sense, and Boulez's

bar-line beats are strong, which is not always the case with composers who employ variable metres.

Beat in the *Zeitmasse* is a different matter. At times it disappears from our sensation entirely, though of course it is still computable. It is difficult to follow in other places and in still others you must choose one of several possibilities. These sections occur piecemeal throughout the *Zeitmasse* but are more concentrated in bars 156 to 206. Stockhausen frames these no-overall-beat passages with ordinary beat-pattern music—realizing that if he is to dispense with something it must exist in the first place. He then destroys the beat gradually. His first step is to relate freely—that is, more or less precisely but allowing for individual players' abilities—lines that by pattern accent cannot be reduced to a common beat; these lines are co-ordinated approximately to one line which is in fact precisely and evenly pulsed (bar 29 and following). Another step is to employ a unit of measurement that is too small (fast) to be distinguishable as a beat. Also, Stockhausen uses speed-up and slow-down co-ordinating patterns that are expressible as beats only in terms of inconstant equations. Some sections again are based on the pattern beat of one instrument (the oboe part at bar 161), but in the ensemble these individual patterns disappear. The 'loss' of beat is therefore a kind of parallel to the 'loss' of pitch in the high *staccato* note of the oboe.

How does one perform such music? We began by fixing the approximate location of the beats in relation to the individual parts—if one part had a beat at all—but insisted that the players be only vaguely conscious of them. Then, when the performers were accustomed to their individual measure of speed and duration, we would stop beating and only cue or guide the speed of this or that part. Essentially, however, the matter is in the composer's calculations—above all, in his calculations of instrumental technique. In my opinion Stockhausen's inventiveness and discovery in this field of rhythmic co-ordination are of the greatest interest and importance. There are, incidentally, even more striking passages of this sort in his *Gruppen* for three orchestras (which we plan to record for American Columbia in the near future, one orchestra at a time against ourselves).

Expression marks, dynamics, volumes, are subject to serial rotation in the new music. This amounts to a dynamic distinction for almost every note. It is extremely difficult to achieve in performance and in recording does not come out very well (recorded dynamics usually range between *mp* and *f*, and *ppps* often appear on discs translated up to *mp*). It requires a control most players cannot even approximate as yet.

Again, Beethoven is the breakthrough, especially in his late piano sonatas (the introduction to the *Arioso* of Opus 110, for example). After Beethoven, dynamic and interpretative markings proliferate until Webern marks every note, or the dynamic direction of every note.

Electronic music—Stockhausen's own—is the most obvious influence on the *Zeitmasse*. In fact, the two kinds of composition ought to be considered side by side. The truth is, however, that I am incompetent to do so and will therefore have to stop at recommending the *Zeitmasse* to the listener as a piece of musical patterns

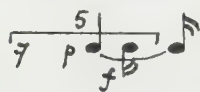
and designs like any other, with tensions, speeds, progression, successive logic of ideas, form, like any other.

The score contains many innovations, some of which I would like to list:

1. The only accidentals in the music are sharps; flats and natural signs have been eliminated. Our players found this system easy to read, far easier than the practice of marking each note with one of the three signs, which superseded the system whereby an accidental ruled for the same note throughout the bar. Stockhausen's sharps are sufficient unto the note thereof.
2. Stockhausen writes the notes more closely together when he intends them to be played *accelerando*, and more widely apart when they are to be played *ritardando*. (One of the basic ideas of the piece is that individual instruments shall start in a slow *tempo* and accelerate—a progressively smaller distance between the notes—or start in a fast *tempo* and retard—a greater distance between the notes.) In practice, this notational psychology offered some difficulty to our players at first because the note values themselves do not increase or decrease as the case may be, and one may slow down in hemidemisemiquavers and speed up in quavers. At bar 171-172 there is a speed-up in one instrument and a slow-down in another to be synchronized precisely.
3. In one place Stockhausen associates short notes with a loud dynamic and long notes with a soft dynamic (at bar 175); he also limits the dynamic of an entire section. An example of this sort, and one which is almost purely dynamic-serial in interest, starts at bar 296.
4. In some passages each instrument follows its own metronome value. For example, at bar 202 the oboe's quaver equals 64, the English horn's quaver equals 80, the clarinet's quaver equals 96, and the bassoon's quaver equals 112.
5. In some passages no part plays a steady beat: each player accelerates or retards individually.
6. In some passages each player follows another player's part, and without counting any measured time plays with or after, but according to, another line. This requires new independence and also new awareness of ensemble.
7. In some passages one part maintains a steady beat; or, rather, a steady beat passes from one part to another. It is never common to all, but all are measured against it approximately. In these passages the player must think his own rhythmic patterns; he may have seven notes to play and the steady beat may fall between the sixth and seventh notes; but he cannot follow the beat if he is to execute his patterns evenly.
8. *Zeitmasse* means *tempi*. The characteristic marking throughout is 'as fast as possible' and 'as slow as possible'. We are inclined to think 'possible' a silly word since we always apprehend widely divergent exceptions. In practice, however, we soon saw that techniques are not so extremely different as to destroy the calculations. The player discovers how rapidly he can execute a figure and deter-

mines his *tempo* by the smallest unit. Metronomic limits and approximations are sometimes given, too.

9. 'In one breath to number . . .' The player's breathing is controlled and therefore phrasing and *tempo*.
10. The proportional mark 4 : 3 (at bar 98) means four note values are to be played in the time of three.
11. Co-ordinated multiple *appoggiaturas*. For example, at 250, the bassoon plays six *appoggiaturas*, the oboe five, the clarinet four, the flute three, and the English horn two, each instrument following the one before in a pyramidal effect.
12. There are no empty bars in the score for the rests. The score is a map only of playing instruments and the eye is orbited to them. (But it could not be written differently because the rests cannot be notated.)
13. A new articulation sign \circ which means strike the note as strongly as possible.
14. A way of showing dynamic change within a sustained note, without *crescendo* or *diminuendo*.



means that the last 5th of the group of 5 is *forte* without intermediate *crescendo* or re-attack.

THE LAZY DOGMAS OF IMPOSSIBILITY. Our performers were less than wildly enthusiastic about the music at first sight, and even at fifteenth sight they were inclined to invent 'lazy dogmas of impossibility' (an early Alpinist quoted in Sir Gavin de Beer's *The First Ascent of Mont Blanc*). However, the performers now feel that these two pieces are perfectly imagined for their instruments. In fact, the instruments have been used so well and to such effect as to cause every player to regret not having more to play.

VLADO PERLEMUTER

The recitals and the master-classes given by Vlado Perlemuter at the Dartington Summer School this August were a memorable experience for those who attended them. One's first reaction is one of astonishment that a pianist of such an altogether exceptional calibre, no longer young, should be totally unknown to the public in England, and indeed to most musicians. International reputations, and even national ones, are not always easily explained and the element of chance plays a disquieteningly large part. It may also be the case (though I am guessing) that M. Perlemuter's art has reached its full development rather late; it is certainly unusual to find such a perfect fusion of imaginative understanding, sound musical judgment and technical virtuosity in the work of a young man; his playing is above all the playing of a very mature musician. Let us hope that we will have frequent opportunities of hearing him in England.

In his recitals M. Perlemuter played works by Chopin and Ravel. His knowledge of both these composers is obviously exceptional, and in the case of Ravel it is reinforced by his having made a detailed study of the works with the composer himself, during the nineteen-twenties. At the same time it would be quite wrong to regard him in any sense as a pianist with a specialized repertoire. The public likes to fix labels on performers; these labels have usually a superficial justification, are frequently for that very reason misleading and at times they are even quite erroneous. It was quite obvious from hearing Perlemuter teach and demonstrate in a large number of different works in his master-class that his technical and interpretative range was very wide. No doubt it is true of him, as it is of every executant one has ever heard, that some works suit him much better than others, but it is surely a matter of particular works rather than of whole categories of music. One had the feeling that there was no important section of the piano literature that he could not play in a way that would make one understand the music better than before. This is not something one can say of very many executants; on the contrary, there are many whom one admires for their skill and their taste who seldom tell one anything new.

In M. Perlemuter's work as a technician there are two things that stand out. The first is that it is above all a comprehensive technique, not specially adapted to the music of particular composers or of a particular period. In France there has always been a special emphasis on finger technique, with a consequent gain in the qualities of clarity and articulation, two qualities in which English pianists are frequently weak; the characteristic failings of many French pianists are rather dryness, and a lack of fullness and warmth of tone in loud playing. Perlemuter has lived in France nearly all his life, and was a pupil of Moszkowski and Cortot; his playing has a very French precision and its subtlety of shading often reminds one of Cortot; but his *forte* and *fortissimo* have a roundness and depth that I never heard from Cortot. The second thing that strikes one is the complete integration between the technical and the musical sides of Perlemuter's playing. There is none of the emphasis on mere facility that spoils the work of many really gifted younger pianists. Perlemuter's natural pianistic gifts are obviously very unusual, but one cannot fail to realize how much prolonged and careful thinking, as well as experiment, has gone and is still going into making his technique what it is—a vehicle constantly being renewed and perfected, for the expression of musical content. It is always difficult to keep a true balance; it is an error to treat technique as an end in itself, and it is also an error to look on it merely as a necessary evil. Josef Hoffmann inclined to the first error, Schnabel to the second, and just because they were both great players their influences could be dangerous. In saying that Perlemuter is quite free from either of these errors it may sound as if that implied that his work embodied some sort of dull middle-of-the-road compromise; what is meant is that he is an exceptional technician and an exceptional musician, and that the two are closely interlocked. If his virtuosity may seem to dazzle less than the virtuosity of a Horowitz, this is surely simply that its aim is never in the first place to dazzle. He may sometimes make an unusual choice of *tempo*, but it is never dictated by any but musical considerations; some of the Chopin *Preludes* and *Studies* were in fact taken at unusually moderate *tempi*, with a great gain in musical expressiveness. Perlemuter's technique would have obviously permitted him to take them at any speed that he thought fit. No doubt only a real virtuoso can know just how to put virtuosity in its right place.

A few months before his death at the age of 95 I had an interesting conversation with Isidore Philipp, a man who must have heard and known nearly all the distinguished pianists of the last hundred years. About Saint-Saens, Paderewski, Busoni, Godowsky and others he had much to say, including many piquant anecdotes. The pianists of today obviously interested him less, he seemed to think that too often they were superficial musicians, and even from the point of view of virtuosity too interested in its merely mechanical aspects. But he mentioned Perlemuter as a man whom he greatly admired, and said I was to remember the name and be sure to take any opportunity I had of hearing him. I remember in particular his saying 'Il joue avec simplicité', which I think was what Philipp felt was the quality most lacking in so many pianists today—the gift of reacting spontaneously to the work, so that the personality of the interpreter serves to transmit, possibly to enhance, but never to distort whatever it is he may be playing. What struck me at once about Perlemuter was this selflessness in his approach to the music. It is easy to say that of course this should be the attitude of all true interpreters; in fact it requires most unusual qualities of sensitiveness and understanding if the result is not to be a merely negative lack of personality. And in fact this does not seem to have been the approach of all great interpreters. Busoni, for example, seems to have been interested almost to the point of obsession in the 'problematic' side of interpretation, in exploring the unsuspected and hidden possibilities in a work, possibilities of which the composer himself might not always be fully aware. At their best Busoni's interpretations must have been blindingly illuminating; at other times they must have seemed like a fascinating and amazingly skilful distortion. Perlemuter's approach may be in a way less searching; he seems less interested in what the composer *might* have intended, more ready to reproduce (as far as one can know) what he did intend.

It is not easy to write a great deal about Perlemuter's classes. The same pianistic and musical qualities showed up here as in his recitals. His methods of teaching appear to be essentially empirical. There was no attempt to enunciate general theories of piano-playing, either from the point of view of technique or of interpretation, but a great concentration on the particular work being studied; and a rare balance between the demands made by a minute attention to every detail of phrasing, tone and accent, and the need of never losing hold of the basic character and structure of the whole work; along with this hall-mark of the true teacher—so seldom found among virtuosos—was the readiness to understand the point of view of the pupil, and to spot his real difficulties. His approach was certainly methodical and there was a great variety of methods for dealing with a great variety of problems, but there does not appear to be a Perlemuter method. The partiality of the English for teachers who say they have 'a method' is interesting. The idea of a method is based on the obvious need for simplification in teaching, and for the elimination of false complexities. What people fail to realize is that there can be a false simplicity, based on the suppression of real complexities. If the elements of a problem can be reduced from fifty to ten there is an obvious and immense gain, but it may often be that the limit has then been reached, and that the attempt to reduce them to two or three is as misleading in its apparent simplicity as were the previous unnecessary tangles. It may be that in a different environment Perlemuter's approach would be more theoretical than it was at Dartington, but one was immensely grateful for the total absence of jargon and hair-splitting, and the readiness to go straight to the root of any problem and to produce its practical solution. In many ways it was his playing of particular passages, even more than what he said, that made things so clear; but frequently his verbal comments brought out simple fundamental truths, truths that ought to be obvious, but which perhaps for that very reason one is constantly overlooking. 'In Mozart one should be always thinking of the human voice; in Beethoven, of the orchestra. Never do things that you would not be justified in asking an orchestra to do.' 'Ravel should never be played in an unexpressive manner, but the expression of the detail should always be related to the content and the form of the piece as a whole.' '*Rubato* is mainly a matter of breathing' ('le *rubato* est surtout une affaire de respiration'). 'In Chopin always practise left-hand parts very carefully (this was with special reference to the *Barcarolle*); it is the steadiness and the evenness of the left hand that make the freedom of the right hand intelligible.' There was indeed a constant attention to every element in the musical structure of a piece, as well as to every technical detail, and a complete avoidance of the approach that seeks a superficial effectiveness through an exaggerated emphasis on single aspects of the work, isolated from the whole. It is not of course that Perlemuter's interpretations were 'the last word', or in any sense claimed to be. His approach might sometimes be different from one's own; that is right and normal and it is in any case no valid criticism to say 'that it is not how I would play it'. It is indeed rare to hear interpretations showing so much thought, understanding and sensitiveness in conception, and such varied skill in execution.

ROBERT COLLET

‘NO REAL CASUALTIES’?

Reading what the three eminent contributors to the last issue of this journal had to say about my article on Serialism, one would not guess that it contained the following assertions:

(1) Schoenberg's pitch-set, from which rhythmic and harmonic implications are assumed to have been abstracted, does not survive its use in composition. When the four forms of the series through different rhythmic accentuation enter into different thematic allegiances, their kinship in respect of their pitch relations becomes insignificant and of merely statistical interest.

(2) Chords cannot be derived from a series by sounding some of its notes simultaneously instead of successively, since this abolishes the order of the notes and thus destroys the identity of the series. What survives is merely the stock of notes and whatever harmonic implication they may suggest. Simultaneity is not just another aspect of sequence, but its obliteration.

(3) The attempt to create a new link between the horizontal and vertical is not only abortive but abandons half-way the idea of a new unity of the musical material which gave rise to its conception; because it applies only to some chords and not to others at the discretion of the composer. Chords formed 'inadvertently' by simultaneously sounding lines are usually disregarded.

(4) Since the identity of a series consists exclusively of the sequence of its terms it is meaningless to alter that sequence in the course of serial manipulation by fragmentary interpolation or transposition.

(5) Since the identity of a note with all its octaves is only harmonically true, its acceptance in a system dealing exclusively with pitch relations is self-contradictory. It is therefore from the serial point of view untrue that there are only twelve notes available and also that a series remains the same if one or more of its notes appear in a different octave.

The only disagreement with any of this is Professor Sessions's claim that octave identity is a matter 'simply of experience'. He tries to counter my contention that this undoubted experience is harmonic by mentioning the octave doubling of melodies. While he is being extremely selective in choosing, from the many billions of such instances, one each from Bach and Beethoven and the singing together of men and women, he is mistaken in his implied assumption that the question of harmony does not arise here. If it were true that an unaccompanied melody is merely understood as the sum of its rhythms and pitch relations we should rightly marvel at the curious distinction we seem to make between identical melodic shapes travelling on the one hand in unison or at the octave, and on the other hand at a distance of a fifth, a fourth, or of any other interval.

But the fact is that a melody is by no means understood merely as a sequence of rhythms and pitch relations, but that the combination of the two constantly moves us to interpret each note harmonically. Since these harmonizations are implied there is a certain margin for variation: witness the gentle shudder induced in us by the National Anthem in a new guise. But this margin is quite insignificant compared with the degree of definition. It is this harmonic aspect of a melody which only remains identical when it is played in unison or in octaves, but is different at all other distances. And so, while remaining well aware that the point of octave doubling lies in its being distinct from the unison, we nevertheless accept, for this harmonic reason alone, melodies at the octave as identical.

Apart from this, the truth of my contentions is not challenged. What must have appeared to my composer critics more than to anyone else as the burden of my argument, they ignored. This tacit agreement is tempered with apologetic pointers to our tonal history, such as the assertion of the composer's ancient right to 'ignore the letter of the law at any time, if there is a serious reason for doing so'.

The disregarding of rules can only be meaningful, if it was ever meaningful to observe them. The serialist dilemma of wanting to work to rules of unprecedented strictness, while at the same time discarding them with perplexing rapidity, has its roots in a failure to distinguish between a game and its rules and to ensure their compatibility.

The essence of the tonal game lies in exploiting our specifically musical ability to hear chords not only as isolated events but to set up hierarchical relations between them and to understand some as functions of others. One rule imposed on this game allows only those harmonic progressions that can be so understood and another lays down which progressions comply with this condition and which do not. The latter rule kept on changing throughout tonal history so that time and again combinations of chords, which earlier on would have been regarded as non-sensical, began to make functional sense. From this we learned that to disregard a rule need not be a sign of incompetence but may mean the opening up of new vistas. When Beethoven wrote this progression in No. 20 of his *Diabelli Variations*:



he demonstrated the listener's ability to supply, in the context of this variation, the missing harmonic links and to feel the required continuity between what previously would have been regarded as unconnected chords. He had widened a rule but was still playing the game.

We must not make such allowances in serialism without considering that Schoenberg has changed the game by replacing the loss of functional harmony with a system based on our awareness of pitch sequences. While one could imagine conditions under which this game could be successfully played, such as monodic repeats of the series, Schoenberg actually imposed the rule that *all* pitch-aspects of a *polyphonic* composition must be derived from a given pitch set. This rule is incompatible with the game, since in chord derivation the pitch sequences disappear and we cannot remain aware of them. The withering away of this solitary rule of total derivation is a direct result of the initial discrepancy and must not be compared with our progressive exploration of functional harmony.

Another tempting, though fallacious, comparison between serialism and tonality is offered by Professor Piston when he calls it 'quibbling to complain that a chord in twelve-tone music does not show its derivation from a certain series, considering that in orthodox tonal harmony one cannot tell the key of a solitary chord'.

The terms 'the key of C major' or 'the key of F sharp major' are exclusively made up of such statements as that for instance the G-major chord is their dominant, or, respectively, their Neapolitan sixth; it is only in this way that they are distinguishable from one another. To choose one of the many alternatives of interpreting a chord constitutes a compositional act. This means, of course, that we are not *supposed* to know the key of a solitary chord since it is precisely its key-indeterminacy, with its possibility of choice, which constitutes the material for the compositional activity.

In serialism, on the other hand, we *are* supposed to tell the serial fragment from which a chord is derived, merely by listening to the chord—because serial derivation is not a compositional act, but a condition imposed on such acts. It is a rule which tries to impart the quality of sameness to all pitch aspects of a composition by setting up a relation between a serial fragment and its chord—rather reminiscent of that between ice and water, where we may be sure that a change of temperature will turn one into the other.

It follows that the parallel in tonal composition to the relation of a chord to its fragment in serialism is not the relation of a chord to its key, but of a melody to its accompaniment; because in tonality, listening to a chord does tell us one thing about any melody it may be made to accompany: its harmony. This tautological condition imposed on tonal composition, that simultaneous events must contain the same harmony, serialism tried, *mutatis mutandis*, to replace by another tautology. Only, the fact is that harmonies can serve as a constant horizontally and vertically, while pitch relations cannot. If, therefore, serial derivation fails in its limited objective of establishing a two-way identity relation between a fragment and its chord, there is ground for complaint after all.

Looking at Sergeant Smith's stripes we don't expect to be able to tell whether he is junior or senior to Brown, unless we see Brown in uniform too. But we are justifiably disappointed if looking at his Regimental Badge we still don't know what regiment he belongs to, because the

same badge is worn by 959 other regiments as well as his own (supposing our Sergeant to be a 5-note chord).

Meanwhile I have myself been wondering, whether my analysis of serial chord derivation really condemns it altogether? That the pitch sequence of a serial fragment gets lost when it is played as a chord means that 'pater est semper incertus'. But although our blood test has shown that not only one, but many series can be the father of a chord, there are also many that can't be, so that there is after all such a thing as a serially wrong chord. If I play five notes first in succession and then simultaneously, I will say: 'Aha!' Clearly some kind of labelling is succeeding here and Schoenberg is doing well after all? But then, how can we account for the discrepancy between the success of this isolated experiment and the fact on which we are all agreed: that, in the words of Mr. Gerhard, it would be 'an odd case of auditory perversion' if someone were 'able to detect and to follow the serial thread in audition'?

To understand this, we must consider the nature of the link between fragment and chord. It is a mixture of two experiences: remembering the notes and remembering the harmony. Although the mixture varies according to how clear-cut the harmonic implication is, note-memory is bound to be the weaker strand. The sheer pitch differences of notes, irrespective of their tonal evaluation, are of primary importance in sequence, since essentially this is nothing but their arrangement in time. But they are of secondary importance in chords, where the harmonic aspect becomes paramount, while they are merely felt as spacing. However, since the fragment, too, contains the same harmonic implication as the chord, the fact that note-memory takes second place does not vitiate the link between the two. Indeed, if serial composition consisted in constantly following up a fragment by its chord, derivation would be meaningful, and even audible, within the limits set by the loss of sequence. But this is not allowed to happen, since according to serial rule the chord, instead of following the fragment, must take its place. However, the isolated fragment-chord test falsifies serial reality more profoundly and decisively.

While the chord groups the 5 notes irrevocably together and unambiguously presents whatever harmonic implication their coexistence may yield, in the fragment awareness of that implication is the result of a summing up—it happens retrospectively, through memory.

But since in reality the fragment may never appear in isolation, my harmonic assessment is bound to be influenced by what comes before and after it; indeed, it is not fair to speak of 'it' and 'before' and 'after'. For, when listening to the series and assessing its harmonic properties, we cannot even be supposed to know that 'it' will at some later point appear in the form of a chord, comprising, say, Nos. 2-7 of the series. Consequently we cannot take into consideration the harmonic aspect of this particular group.

Listening to Nos. 2-7 by themselves may suggest, say, No. 3 as the focal point, to which the other notes are related; while listening to the whole series this evaluation is unlikely to arise, since instead of it a common chord formed by, say, Nos. 4, 8, 12 might be felt to be its harmonic characteristic; or we may, on the contrary, be induced to subdivide it harmonically into two groups, say, 1-5 centring around 2, and 6-12 around 9, and so on.

Getting acquainted with the series—which is a horizontal shape—will enable one to recognize the shape of fragments; but it will not convey any knowledge of their harmonic implications. Only listening to the fragment by itself will teach us what harmony to expect from its chord. Again, knowledge of the series will enable us to appreciate the serial relation between any two fragments, say, Nos. 2-7 and 4-9: namely that one starts and stops two terms earlier than the other. But it will be of no use in understanding the relation between their harmonic implications, which are bound to contain a tension not inherent in their sequential aspect.

But in addition to these purely serial considerations a description of our auditory prospecting activities has yet to take into account the most powerful influence on our harmonic evaluation of pitch sequences: their constantly changing rhythmization. In fact, whether we think of the series as a de-rhythmicized pitch-set or an actually sounding melodic shape, the derived chord will, through its harmonic aspect, impute to it properties it possesses not intrinsically, but merely potentially, that is, only in so far as the fragment from which the chord is derived appears in isolation, out of serial and rhythmical context.

On the other hand, chords go on pointing beyond themselves irrespective of the composer's intentions, and so we cannot help establishing harmonic links between them and understanding them in the light of one another. At the same time we interpret the melodies we hear on their harmonic merits as suggested to us by analogy and rhythm.

In this way serialism forces the harmonic aspect of horizontal and vertical events in atonality on to different tracks and thus profoundly aggravates their disconnectedness which it was meant to alleviate. The only link between these two simultaneous but not synchronized harmonic experiences to which serialism exposes us, is the note-identity between a chord and its supposed fragment—a fragile bond, as we saw from the outset, but now ground into oblivion by the forces of harmony.

That Schoenberg's derived chord fails in its declared purpose of representing the sequence of its fragment is a minor trouble compared with the calamity that it does represent its harmony.

My investigations led to the conclusion that serial manipulation—in so far as it is non-thematic—is meaningless and irrelevant. Since the effect of serial activity exists merely in the composer's imagination, his compositional freedom is *de facto* restored. This explains the emergence of successful serial works, which might well be what they are without their serial history.

The basic assertion of serialism's irrelevancy was not challenged directly. Instead my critics tried to establish the irrelevancy of this irrelevancy by insisting that serial practice, though admittedly affecting neither the listener nor the music, does make a difference to the composer.

The limitation of serial radiation to the vicinity of the composer himself was foreshadowed by Schoenberg's early withdrawal from the 'system' to a mere 'technique'. If this is taken a stage further by comparing the composer's use of serialism to his standing on a scaffolding, the thought might still comfort us that, though the scaffolding is eventually taken away, we, looking at the frieze, cannot help concluding that it must have been there. But if it is claimed that 'the vital information about the potentialities of serial technique is not available except on the wavelength of creative experience'—then discussion must stop. We can never hope to trace the scent of seasoned apples which Schiller liked to keep in his study, when we go and see *Maria Stuart*.

PETER STADLEN

CONTRIBUTORS TO THIS ISSUE

OLIVER NEIGHBOUR: Born 1923. Works in the Music Room at the British Museum. In the last few years has contributed articles and reviews to various periodicals, has lectured and broadcast. Edited the first complete edition of Schumann's Third Sonata for violin and piano, published by Schott & Co.

HANS KELLER: Born 1919. Writings and research fall mainly into four classes; analysis, criticism, criticism of criticism, and psychology, chiefly of musical composition. Is at present preparing a book entitled *Criticism: A Musician's Manifesto* (André Deutsch), and developing his 'Functional Analysis'.

SUSANNE K. LANGER: Philosopher. Born in New York, of German parents. Studied at Radcliffe College and at the University of Vienna. Has been tutor in Philosophy at many American universities, and has written several important books, including *Philosophy in a New Key* and *Feeling and Form*. It is from the second of these that the article in the present issue is taken. It is reprinted by courtesy of Routledge and Kegan Paul, and in the hope that those who have not come across this book will be tempted to read the whole of it, for it has profound things to say to everyone interested in the arts.

ROBERT CRAFT: Born in 1923 and lives in Hollywood, where he conducts the Monday Evening Concerts and in the Spring (for the last four years) the Ojai Festival. Has written short books on Stravinsky and Webern and recorded many important contemporary works for American Columbia.

ROBERT COLLET: Born London, 1905. Studied composition at Cambridge under C. B. Rootham and Edward Dent, 1925-7. Solo pianist. Pupil of Frida Kindler (Mrs. Bernard van Dieren). Teaches the piano at the Guildhall School of Music and at Harrow.

PETER STADLEN: Born 1910 in Vienna. Lives in London. Until recently concert pianist. Appeared at Festivals of Darmstadt, Edinburgh, Frankfurt, Holland, Venice, Vienna. Has given many first performances of twelve-note compositions. Received Schoenberg medal in 1952 from Austrian Ministry of Culture in conjunction with Austrian Section of I.S.C.M. In recent years has broadcast many talks and undertaken musicological research. Is engaged in writing a study of the implications of sketches and corrections in the Viennese classics.

The letters of Webern and Schoenberg are published by kind permission of Frau Amalie Waller and Mrs. Gertrud Schoenberg, respectively.

The first of these is the fact that the...
the second is the fact that the...
the third is the fact that the...

The fourth is the fact that the...
the fifth is the fact that the...

The sixth is the fact that the...
the seventh is the fact that the...

The eighth is the fact that the...
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The tenth is the fact that the...
the eleventh is the fact that the...

The twelfth is the fact that the...
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the seventeenth is the fact that the...

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the twenty-seventh is the fact that the...

The twenty-eighth is the fact that the...
the twenty-ninth is the fact that the...

The thirtieth is the fact that the...
the thirty-first is the fact that the...

